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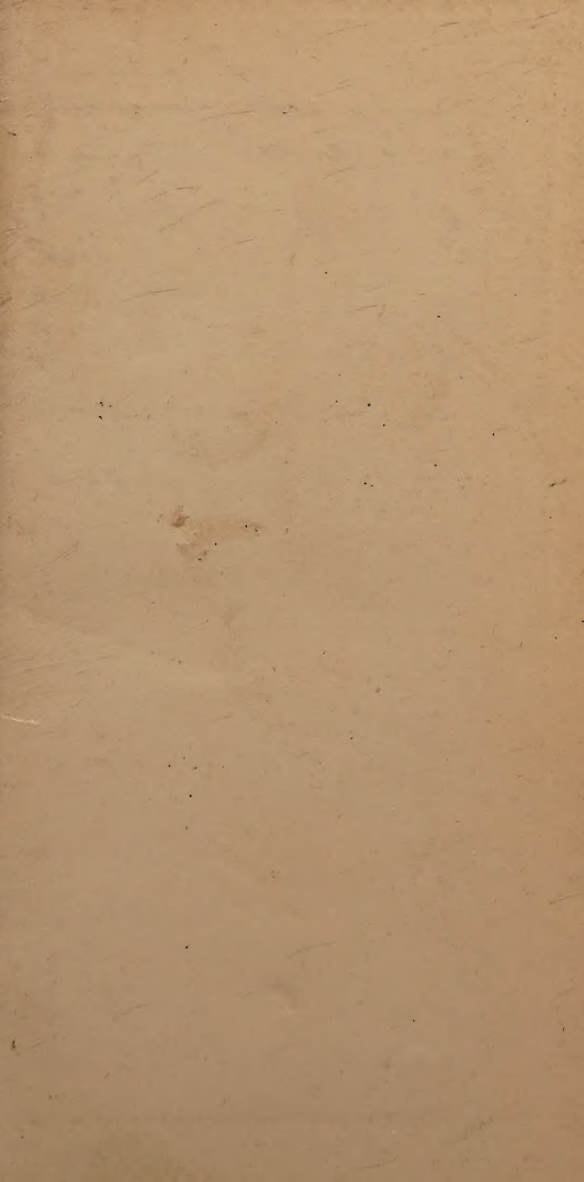
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THE SPIRITUAL BIOGRAPHY
OF JESUS CHRIST

The Spiritual Biography of Jesus Christ

According to the Saintly Essenes

Being Ideal Studies in the First Century
of the Christian Era

By

Emil P. Berg

Author of "Our Lord's Preparation for the Messiahship"

"God the Beautiful," "Where is Heaven?"

Etc. Etc.

Vol. II

The Fourth Gospel

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THE SPIRITUAL BIOGRAPHY OF JESUS CHRIST

THE SPIRITUAL BIOGRAPHY

AFTER the aged Superior had reached his cell and taken a long rest, he felt better. His devotional exercises being over, he lay for a long time in deep thought.

At last he sent for Reuben, and when he arrived, he, with his usual courtesy, thanked him for his attention, and said, in reply to Reuben's anxious inquiry, that he felt somewhat better. He continued, saying:—"Dearest brother, I heard very much in your favour before you came here; but since I made your personal acquaintance, I have come to think still more highly of you in every way. You remind me in many respects

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of our dear Jesus, whom I loved and admired with all my heart and who is ever in my thoughts. I am now near the threshold of my eightieth birthday, and warnings come daily to me that ere long my life's pilgrimage is over. Jehovah, blessed be His name, has been good to me all the way. Now, as I look back at the evening of my long life, I can truly say with the Psalmist of old, that 'goodness and mercy have followed me all the days of my life'; and as another existence, a higher life, is opening with glimpses of its golden portals before my enraptured gaze, I seem at times also to listen to sweet, well-remembered voices, inviting me soon to join their loving circle above, or I seem to listen to the sweet strains of some enchanting music, drawing the soul upwards and heavenwards in an ecstasy of perfect bliss. With the Psalmist I will say further, in deepest humility, but with an unfaltering trust, that in this celestial home above I also hope to dwell for ever with the Lord, enjoying Jehovah's favour, His protection, His bounty; and

to have His loving communion, as we worship Him in the beauty of holiness.

“Yes, I believe that in these blessed heavenly environments the soul will go on for ever expanding to greater fulness of life, to deeper wisdom, and to higher beauty; and with the benediction of Jehovah, it will live through eternity, with an unspeakable joy filling the heart. Yet one other thought often visits me, to cheer me when at night sleep forsakes me. This thought also fills my soul with unspeakable gladness. It is the hope that my future life shall not be a solitary, ascetic life, such as I have lived on earth; but that the heart’s dearest longings, and those who were to me dearer and sweeter than life itself, shall be meeting me to make the heavenly existence complete in its soul-filling, overflowing joy. And if there is one in heaven whom my soul longs to meet again, next to her who was to me the dearest of all mothers, it is our Jesus, who so gloriously has justified our expectations and our choice in him as the spiritual Messiah. My love to him

is like the love which Jonathan bare to David, passing the love of women.

“Yes, amidst heaven’s glorious surroundings, and the songs of angels, my soul shall look impatiently to clasp to my heart this son of my deepest love upon earth, and I feel that my prayer will be answered. It will be a heaven of bliss to me, to dwell with him for ever.

“But now, after this digression, let me come to the point; and that is, to ask you to be my legatee after I have passed away. I have left a will signed and sealed, deposited in our treasure chest. In this, after my death, will be found a letter appointing you to the post, and then the will will be handed to you to follow my instructions. I may as well tell you at once what my last will contains. I leave one-third of the money which I possess, and which I have inherited from others, to the poor of Engedi, and for the maintenance of the cause of our Essenes. The second third I leave to you, as your absolute property. The remaining third I leave for

the cause of our Messiah, and to spread his doctrine of love everywhere; which is, in fact, the one faith for which I have striven all my days, and with which Jesus and myself were both as one—namely, to teach to the whole world the fatherhood of God, the brotherhood of man, his divinity and therefore his dignity, and the coming glory in the life eternal, upon which man here is only taking the first faltering steps, preparatory to an immortal career before him of usefulness, of progress, of glory, and of happiness.”

Reuben thanked the aged Superior warmly for the honour of being appointed his trustee, and for his unexpected gift to him. He promised if he was spared that he would carry out all the instructions, to the minutest details.

The aged Superior pressed Reuben to his heart and gave him his blessing, after which he continued his conversation, saying:—

“You have made me happy by your promises and have set my mind at rest. Now, there is only one more request which I will

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lay on your heart, to do for me after my departure. But first let me explain myself. I hand you herewith a sealed roll of MS. written by myself in Greek on parchments, as this is more durable than papyrus rolls. You must, however, only open this roll after my death, when you will find that the sheets contain an outline of the Spiritual Biography of Jesus, and more especially the thoughts which, as our incarnate Logos—the true Revealer of God—I conceive would have passed through the mind of Jesus during the last hours with his disciples, and when alone with God, standing, as he knew, at the gates of death.

“I knew him so intimately that I can put myself in his place and follow his train of thoughts just before his betrayal, his sufferings, and his crucifixion. Let the world know: for of this I am quite sure, that he drew his inspiration, his strength of mind, his holy courage, his sublime faith, from the realisation of the glorious oneness which existed between his Father in Heaven and himself. With his

heavenly Father at his side, to uphold and strengthen him, he was ready to bear the cross and to suffer the shame. Ah! I knew Jesus so well—indeed, as if he was my own *alter ego*. Often, very often, we prayed and meditated together on this wonderful theme, which was so precious to him, as it was to myself.

“Take, therefore, these sheets; keep them, treasure them. Perhaps they may be a consolation, a tower of strength, to generations yet unborn. Let them form the leading part of the spiritual memoirs which I had intended to write of him in full, and for which purpose I had conceived several addresses in the spirit in which I know he would have spoken to his intimate associates around him, concerning the heavy trials and persecution which he saw they were on the point of encountering; but I know also that he would at the same time comfort them with the assurance that their souls would be filled with peace and joy, and the victory in the end would be theirs, because they were suffering for righteousness’ sake.

“Now, you may ask what is to be the out-

standing theme of this spiritual biography, and my reply is, that it must be above all an elaboration of the one dominant thought—namely, that God in these latter days has at last ‘revealed’ Himself fully and finally in the person of Jesus, our incarnate Logos, as being *infinite Love*—of which our Christ is the only true Revealer. Hence, in his life of love upon earth he will reflect God in His beautiful character of grace, pity, and tenderest love to humanity. Therefore, Christ is reported to have said to one of his disciples, ‘Whosoever hath seen me hath seen the Father.’ He said this because he mirrored God in his life of love, of pity, mercy and self-sacrifice for others. The spiritual biography must show distinctly that all that happens to the Logos is predetermined by God and voluntarily encountered. As a divine incarnation he must declare his own dignity, as Philo has shown us, and he must inculcate the belief in his teaching and in himself as the only means of the world’s salvation from the reign of the Evil One whom he has come to destroy.

“Now let me remind you that Philo, in one of his extant writings, assigns to the Logos, as an incarnation of the Highest, the position of the ‘Revealer of God’; and in this aspect I believe he was right, if we look upon the incarnate ‘Logos’ as being one of God’s chief Creations, but not a Creator or as a Person in the Godhead. It follows, therefore, that to our Christ, as a created being, belongs the sole honour of being the true incarnate divine Logos of the world, yea, even perhaps in a higher and more practical and blessed sense than was ever conceived either by Philo, the Stoics, or by Heraclitus, who only dwelt upon this name as an abstract conception.

“Mark, however, the consequences of admitting this claim, for instead of the mission of Jesus being only a sectarian difference with the Jews in the Holy Land, who as a Nation and a Church had rejected him, the claim of Jesus, as being to the world the true ‘Revealer’ of God, becomes a theme of the highest interest and significance, whether to the mystical school of the Jews, to the Hellenised Jews, to the

Greeks, the Romans, or the Alexandrian and Oriental schools—in fact, to the whole civilised world with religious aspirations.

“The claim made for our Christ as having been the incarnated Logos, interpreted as the ‘true Revealer of God,’ results in this, that now at last a solid foundation is laid, upon which may be erected the temple of a universal and spiritual religion. Such a universal faith must be adapted to the meanest capacity and to the loftiest intellect, such as are found among the philosophers and seekers after wisdom, whether Gnostics, Orientals, Stoics, Cabalists, the disciples of Mithras, Bacchus, Krishna, or Buddha, with all other of the mystic schools of wisdom. All will be able to join the new universal faith, without renouncing the rest of their lofty spiritual heritage; indeed, every noble attainment, every element of true wisdom and spiritual beauty worth preserving, will meet a warm welcome, and will be easily incorporated in the new dispensation. But I need say no more.

“Having made this first step, let me repeat

(for it is of vital importance) that the spiritual biography must not merely affirm the ‘Revealer of God’ in a speculative aspect, but it must also present him in his incarnation as the only true ‘*Likeness or Reflector*’ of his Heavenly Father; by radiating in this earthly life the spiritual beauty, wisdom, and exceeding love in which humanity must henceforth realise God in all His wonderful perfections.

“The spiritual biography must, therefore, necessarily contain specimens of the spirit which animated the incarnate Revealer, so that thereby all may be induced to follow him. By thus assimilating him in his life and character, their souls will be clothed like himself in the garments of beauty, joy, and holiness.

“These specimens which testify of Jesus being the true Revealer incarnate may be classed, roughly speaking, in a threefold manner, say—

1st. By his *deeds* of love and mercy—to all sinners and sufferers, whoever they may be.

2nd. By his *words* of love and wisdom to each and all—even to the most depraved, as also to all sorrowing souls or those in deep darkness and distress.

3rd. By his *adoring spirit* of love and consecration—in his secret communion with his Heavenly Father.

The details of deeds and words I leave partly to you or your collaborator, to fill into my outlines; pray draw them from striking events or records handed down by tradition or otherwise, and which exemplify the spiritual teaching. The question is not so much of the outward shell in which these are conveyed, as of the inward kernel, *i.e.* the spirit in which all is said or done.

“The last task is one which I can alone venture to set forth in full, for reasons given. This I have commemorated in the MS. in your possession, which includes the prayers which I conceive our Logos would address to his exalted Father when—on the point of losing his own life—he surrendered the mission to which he had been called: to glorify God

upon earth and to bless the world by deeds and words.

“On that solemn occasion, when his soul would be sorrowful unto death, I am sure he would confide once more to his beloved Father all that stirred within his soul, praying for himself for strength to glorify Him to the end in the last conflict and when nailed to the dreaded cross.

“But not alone about himself would he be thinking; he would offer an intercessory prayer for his friends and disciples who had stood by him to the last, and now would have to face persecutions, even death, just like himself; and then he would pray for all in the world who would come to believe in him and to consecrate their lives to God’s service as he and his had done to the end.

“In this ‘spiritual biography’ you will also have an opportunity of correcting the many wrong ideas of Cabalists, and most other mystic sects, who teach the dualism between God and the world. These put a one-sided emphasis on the importance of intellectual

knowledge, not giving its proper place to the higher value of *true heart* service when trying to realise the character of God; and thus they miss solving the riddle of existence, for only by '*heart service*,' '*heart adoration*,' and '*love's sacrifices*,' is God truly apprehended, and by these only is true spiritual worship to be offered to Him.

"I would advise you or your coadjutors to close the '*spiritual biography*' with the death of our Christ on the cross; or if you decide to include the reported bodily resurrection and ascension, make it clear that these only stand for symbols or allegories of the '*spiritual*' resurrection and ascension, wherein lies the sole truth.

"Remember, also, that our Jesus the Logos, for reasons of prudence, and also as a student of the Essenes, who had been accustomed for years to allegorise the Scriptures, continued this mode during his whole ministry, by teaching chiefly in figurative language. This mode has given rise to reports of many wonderful miracles having taken place, re-

porting metaphorical language as actual events.

“Before I forget it, I must come back to what was said yesterday about the miracle of turning water into wine, which was stated to have been drawn from the Bacchus cult. It may be so, but there is another explanation which has come to my recollection; and that is, that more likely it may have been drawn originally from one of Philo’s works on ‘Allegory,’ where he says, in expounding the Scriptures, that the Logos appeared under the form of Melchizedek bringing wine (*i.e.* the true religion) instead of water (*i.e.* the false religion) to souls thirsting for spiritual refreshment—also that the time of Messiah’s coming would resemble a wedding feast, and that at such time there will be no fasting, for the Messiah would provide wine to the feast instead of water.

“Hence you see how easy it is for zealous disciples, who are led astray by want of proper training, to represent as actual events those which in the first place were only meant as

allegories. This is one instance which occurs to me, where an allegory has been transformed into a beautiful but miraculous event.

“I know I throw a great burden upon you, by asking you to complete this spiritual biography or to get other capable disciples to assist you. The fact is, that I am too old to complete this interesting spiritual biography; besides, I feel the time has not come for its publication. Wait and see what others produce. These will be a guide to you, for it will be useless to produce or relate what others before you have given to the world.

“I know your literary gifts are of a high order, and the Greek language is known to you as your mother-tongue. Wait, therefore, say ten years, before you send it out to the Churches. You will then celebrate the memorial service of the Messiah’s death thirty-five years before. From what you tell me, you will probably by that time be at Alexandria, since you intend by-and-by to make this seat of learning your future home.

“Later, when I have examined the various

MS. you and others entrusted to me, and when I have made a selection, I shall return them all to you. Tell me, however, to whom do you intend to send them ? ”

Reuben replied:—“Revered Superior, I made the acquaintance of Marcus first at Antioch; after which he was to visit Ephesus, perhaps later Rome and also Alexandria. He requested me to send him as soon as possible any records of the Messiah’s reported cures and healings current in the Holy Land where I was visiting, in order to check these with what Simeon and others had told him previously, and which the catechists had put in circulation in the wide districts where Simon Peter had resided for some years. He did not seem to care for any of the parables or discourses; perhaps he had sufficient on hand.

“ Marcus told me that his idea was to write a short biography, to serve as a manual to all teachers under him. He would write it in Aramaic for common Jews, and get Sylvanus or another Hermeneut (amanuensis) to translate it into Greek for the educated Jews, and also for

use in Alexandria; and probably also have it translated into Latin, if he comes to visit Rome, where it might be useful among the converts of the Roman population.

“His idea was to start the memoirs with the advent of the Baptism, and then give the main events of the public life of Jesus, with a selection of his words, but chiefly of his deeds. He would then close with the death on the cross of Jesus; but if any catechists or others should afterwards add appendix or make alterations, he could not of course be held responsible. The main train of thought would be to present the Messiah as the ‘Prophet of God,’ one who, like the prophet of old, Elijah, proved his calling by being a ‘wonder-worker.’ Indeed, the Jews in Samaria, of whom many had become converts, would only accept Jesus as the Messiah if presented in this way; hence the memoir on this basis should suit them admirably.”

Reuben continued:—“I intend to send to Matthew and Luke some copies in Aramaic and Greek, not only of all the wonderful

stories of cures and healings which I promised to forward to Marcus, but also divide the rest of the records among the two former—which will include the parables, discourses, short sayings, and other events in the life of the Messiah, which have been gathered together. Each of them will thus be able to compare our papyrus rolls with what they may already possess, and make a selection. I know that these two friends intend to draw up fuller memoirs than Marcus, hence they will appreciate whatever miscellaneous material I may send them for that purpose. I do not think these three memoirs will clash with each other, for they will be used in widely different regions.

“Thus Matthew’s memoirs will probably be written at first in Aramaic to the Jews in Judæa, and afterwards translated into Greek for the use of Jewish converts in the Diaspora near his abode, or in that region. These memoirs should be in favour especially with the narrow-minded Jews, for Matthew’s object is to show that our Christ was the fulfiller

of the Old Testament prophecies, and the realisation of Old Testament life, faith, and hope; and it is precisely upon this point that such Jews must be satisfied before they will be converted. Therefore Matthew takes his keynote from the book of Daniel, which is a celebrated manual of Messianic prophecies. Then Matthew has also to prove to them from the genealogies that Jesus was the son of Abraham, and also of King David, without which he could not fulfil to them the ideal Messiah for which they have been waiting.

“Luke, who is the amanuensis and friend of Paul, has another object in composing his memoirs. He told me that he was in no hurry to take up the work, as he wished first to know what others had been doing in writing memoirs. There were, of course, many hundreds of travelling preachers or catechists who recorded traditions and miracles about the Master, but many of them were clearly pure inventions or exaggerated stories—hence, there was great need of care in

making a collection for the churches in the dispersion.

“As for Luke, like Paul, we may call him the Apostle to the Gentiles, for it is chiefly for their benefit that he intends now to begin to collect materials for the purpose of writing the memoirs of the life and work of the Messiah. To the Gentiles it would be little use to present the Messiah as the son of David, because the Messiah must be preached to them as the Saviour of the whole world—not only of the Jews; and thus show his universality in a threefold way, say—

1st. He is the son of Adam, thus representing the whole of humanity in virtue of which he has become the Saviour of all men.

2nd. He is man's ideal, the image of God in his beautiful character; hence he is the only true Guide in the ways of wisdom, of truth, and of happiness, shown by his own example, his teaching, and his life-work.

3rd. He is symbolically the Redeemer of Mankind, the kinsman who redeems his kinsfolk from the slavery of sins and sorrows, by giving them, by his own example, teachings and sacrifices, the spirit of love to God and of self-sacrificing love to men, whereby he raises them to act and live as children of the Highest and as heirs of glory.

“Now I confess that I should like to see how Luke works out the biography on these lines. I should say that, gentle and amiable as Luke is himself, he will represent the Messiah in the lovable picture of being a blessing and healer to all men around him, revealing thus his deep affections and loving nature; so that, now, when exalted before the whole world, Gentiles may be drawn to Jesus by admiration and love, and hence Luke’s memoirs may well be called the “Gospel of Mercy.” At the same time, Luke, like Matthew, has not, I believe, much of the critical faculty, and hence they may allow to

be included in the memoirs various miraculous narratives just as they reach them, without proper investigation as to their correctness or consultation with Paul about them—if the latter is still alive at that time. I fancy, however, that Luke's biography, being intended chiefly for the converts in Asia Minor and in towns in Greece and its islands, where the new faith has got a footing, will take care that his work is written in the best Greek, of which I believe also that he is a complete master."

The aged Superior had listened with the closest attention to Reuben's lengthened remarks, which had interested him greatly.

Before parting, Reuben said :—"Revered Superior, will you allow me to attach your name to this spiritual biography when it comes to be sent out into the world? In Alexandria, and also here, your name for many years has been honoured and celebrated as 'John the learned Divine,' or 'John the Divine.' May I be permitted to use this title, under which you are known, as its author?"

The old Superior said :—"I fear my name will be forgotten long before the next commemoration service takes place; yea, my life's work, as also my name, are written on the sands of time, and will soon be obliterated—only leaving behind the influence of my life, which I humbly trust may have been one of blessing to some and an inspiration for good to others. However, if you think it advisable to distinguish our memoirs from the manifold other productions, most of them likely anonymous or under fictitious names, call it the biography by John—for truly it is my name—or call it by John the Aged. The flattering titles I do not wish to be perpetuated; besides, only a portion of this biography will belong to me. You yourself, and others you may employ to assist you, have also a right to have your names added. This, however, I leave to yourself to arrange.

"Only one or two more remarks before we separate.

"Through the whole biography in our memoir, be sure to present our Logos as

‘God’s Revealer’—not, of course, as Jehovah Himself or a second God, but as revealing a heart full of love, compassion, and sympathy towards all who need his help; portraying also the sweeter and gentler lineaments of his beautiful character, as this is absolute truth. Therefore, whatever stories are collected or figurative sayings are artistically put together as narratives for the honour of him and his mission, let these be the keynote in every one. This brings me to confess to you that my view is, that it is out of the question to expect that these forthcoming memoirs should be claimed or received as inspired writings from heaven without a single error, just as the Scribes claim this for their own Holy Scriptures from Genesis to Malachi. The Scribes also claim that with the closing of their sacred Canon the stream of divine inspiration has ceased for ever. For myself, I do not believe a word of these exclusive claims made on behalf of the Holy Scriptures, and claimed for other Scriptures as well as ours. Both truth and error are evidently mixed in these old

documents, and it is for each and all to separate the wheat from the tares—by basing the selection or rejection on the lofty standard or principles as laid down by our Christ, by which he revealed God to the world, and by which everything should be judged, whether men or books.

“To compose a work on the life of the Messiah becomes therefore a laborious one, whether at once or for after ages to find out; for the critical faculty must be at work to separate palpable errors and exaggeration from sober truth. Whatever is admitted should be, above all, to honour the Messiah and reveal his beautiful life and lofty principles; and to show that he sacrificed his life for truth’s sake and to glorify God.”

The meeting was now drawing to a close.

Reuben again promised to do his utmost to carry out the wishes of the aged saint, but confessed he was afraid that he was not capable of completing the spiritual biography as it should be done; but in any case he promised that it would be done by the most competent

scholar he could find in Alexandria or Ephesus, when the time came, many years hence, to take the work in hand.

The aged saint was satisfied with this assurance, and seemed quite relieved and happy at having arranged everything as he had planned. He looked, however, tired and exhausted with the week's extra labour thrown upon his hands; but Reuben little dreamed what would happen a few hours afterwards, as the revered Superior gave him his parting blessing and pressed him affectionately to his heart.

THE END

It was late in the evening when the discussion came to a close, after which the three visitors repaired to their respective cells, intending to depart during the following day. However, a couple of hours afterwards, just near midnight, they were summoned to the bedside of the revered Superior, who had suddenly been taken ill. They found their venerable host suffering from spasm of the

heart; and after a few hours, when the sharp attack had left him, he was found to be near his end. Yet his mind was unclouded to the last. He bade his visitors an affectionate farewell, especially Reuben; and then, near day-break, expressed a wish to be carried down to the open court, which was done. There all the brethren of the monastery had gathered, and were waiting to receive his last blessing—which he gave them, accompanied with a few touching parting words.

Just then the sun rose over the hills of Engedi in all his glory, and illuminated the scene where the dying Superior was lying surrounded by the kneeling and weeping brethren of the retreat. Suddenly a bright smile suffused the face of the patriarch, and as he lifted up his hand, he tried to recite the closing lines of the sweet Psalm of David which had always been his favourite: “Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for Thou art with me.” Scarce had these words passed his lips when, unable to finish the closing lines,

his head sank back and his end came quietly and peacefully.

After the simple funeral was over, Reuben remained for some time in the monastery, and with the help of the brethren, many of whom were accomplished linguists and scribes, the materials of the primitive Gospel were carefully examined and arranged into their respective classes.

In due time Reuben sent, by caravans, copies of the primitive Gospel he had collected to Marcus, Luke, and Matthew, of which they afterwards made copious notes for their respective memoirs. Of these Marcus was the first to issue to the churches in his province authorised copies, being all circulated according to his directions. Naturally when, later on, Luke and Matthew gave to the churches in other regions their versions of the life and work of the Messiah, there was found considerable similarity in many parts, not only between Matthew and Luke, but also compared to Marcus—the reason being, that all three had drawn largely from the primitive collection

which had been generously put to their free use by Reuben from Hazazon Tama. Unfortunately the three gospels are known to have been subjected afterwards to alterations and additions by ecclesiastical authorities, to suit their dogmatic teaching, during the two or three centuries in which they were in circulation, and before they were admitted into the sacred canon.

As desired by the late Superior, Reuben sent also a number of papyrus rolls of this primitive biography of the Messiah to the leading centres of poor Christian converts in the Holy Land, being willingly assisted in writing out copies by a number of the Essene scribes in the settlement. These MSS. were thankfully received and used regularly for instruction in the various small congregations scattered over the Holy Land. These early believers were naturally desirous to hear fuller particulars of the Messiah's life, his teaching, and his deeds of mercy, with his sufferings and death. They learned also from these rolls, and which would confirm them in their faith, the

detailed fulfilment of the Messiah as sketched in their old Scriptures. Above all, they lived in daily expectation of hearing of his return to earth or of their translation to heaven, to stand before his judgment seat; therefore, what the Messiah had commanded or promised was their supreme concern. In fact, their only safety was to them to rule their life by his precepts, which they found in these early written records—whereas formerly they had to depend upon oral teaching, consisting of various traditions of the Lord's sayings disseminated by different travelling or local catechists.

During the following twelve years these highly-prized rolls were therefore used regularly in their weekly services, until the war broke out, which at last ended on 7th September 70 A.D. in the overthrow of Jerusalem with its glorious Temple—when the Romans sold a large part of the population, of those who had survived the horror of the siege, into slavery. The overthrow of the whole Jewish nation took place in the

provinces sixty years later, as the result of the revolt of another so-called Messiah, Bar Cochela, who attempted to rebuild the Temple and restore the Jewish nation to its former glory.

Alas, the attempt brought on the final destruction. The Jews were driven *en bloc* into captivity or sold as slaves, *i.e.* those who had not escaped betimes to the Diaspora before the war came to a close. In these convulsions the Christian converts shared the fate of the rest of their countrymen, and all the papyrus rolls in their possession were either lost or destroyed. The private copies sent to the Apostles and their coadjutors also disappeared, after they had served their purpose of enabling the three Evangelists, or whoever they employed, to compose the memoirs which bear their names, and which survive to our days, chiefly by having been admitted into the sacred Canons some centuries later, with other writings, all stamped with infallibility, as being Heaven's revealed truth.

THE FOURTH GOSPEL

AFTER settling up the late Superior's affairs in terms of his instructions, Reuben got possession of the large sealed roll which contained the deceased's contribution to the spiritual biography of Jesus.

As the late Superior had indicated, Reuben found that the MS. contained the outlines of a biography of Jesus, written solely from a mystical and spiritual point of view, so dear to the heart of all Essene students. The outlines were interesting, but the chief interest to Reuben was centred in some detailed impressive addresses put in the mouth of Jesus at the end of his career, say on the night when he met his disciples for the last time.

These mystical utterances were evidently composed in order to present Jesus as having truly been the promised spiritual Messiah, even the Logos from Heaven; whose mission

it was, above all, to reveal God to humanity in the fulness of his love, mercy, and truth. Of this Jesus as the Logos was the "Revealer," so that God and Man might be united in one indissoluble bond of mutual affection, and not only for this short life, but throughout all Eternity living the love life with God and with Christ in glory.

After carefully considering the matter Reuben wrote to his friend Apollos, at Ephesus, asking him to undertake the work, and he promised that he would assist him with suggestions or contributions if required.

To this Apollos, after some pressure, agreed; and when, after nearly ten years, the biography was at last completed, Reuben journeyed partly by sea, from Alexandria to Ephesus, in order to visit Apollos and to read over the advance sheets. The two friends were overjoyed at meeting each other after so long an absence; and as they settled down after having gone over the papyrus rolls Apollos said to Reuben:—

"If our beloved Superior had been alive and read over the spiritual biography of Jesus,

which I have now completed, I fear that in various ways it would not have met his entire approval, but there are weighty reasons which have determined me in the course I have pursued as being most for the honour of the Messiah and the progress of his cause in the world.

“As you know, I have perused with care the other three biographies which go under the complementary titles:—‘According to Mark, Matthew, and Luke.’

“These rolls, as you know, are slowly getting into circulation in different parts of the Empire, say Matthew’s and Mark’s memoirs chiefly among the Jewish converts, while Luke’s appeals mostly to the Gentile converts.

“I have been too busy to investigate the subject, but my friend Sylvanus told me lately, that he had found that the Editor who composed Mark, who was the first to utilise the primitive collection which you kindly distributed as a free-will offering among the Ebionites and other poor disciples in Palestine, has incorporated the major part in his Evangel. On the other hand, the two Editors whose

works go under the names of 'According to Matthew and Luke' have managed to incorporate almost all the Gospel of Mark between them, which means, in other words, that your prior work is found in all the three Evangelists. More especially does this apply to Matthew's Gospel, which is practically a fresh edition enlarged, revised, and recast of your Gospel to the poor. It has, however, been enriched with new materials from other sources, apparently including several rolls of legends floating about, a selection of which you sent part to the Editor of Matthew, and part to the Editor of Luke. Sylvanus understood these included those you considered unsuitable for your special purposes, and which you therefore left out at the advice of our Superior of blessed memory.

"Besides these, some of the apocalyptic fragments in these three Gospels Sylvanus traced as having been drawn from the 'Wisdom and Eschatological Literature,' just as the Messianic hope is found expressed so fully in the Psalter of Solomon and other works of a similar character in use among the pious Jews

in their private devotions. Sylvanus says that he is positive that in several instances the same story or the same miracle has been duplicated by the compilers of the other memoirs. This seems to have arisen by their not having been careful in noticing that what they took to be different incidents were originally drawn from one source, but altered or enlarged as it was transmitted by various channels.

“I am unable to say whether Sylvanus is correct or not, but he told me also that the result of his comparison of these three memoirs was that, by cutting up their contents into short stanzas, the total number summed up to
ca. 2900 stanzas.

Now Sylvanus claimed having
traced that the three col-
lectors had incorporated
in their memoirs, either
separately or jointly from
the materials supplied by
you at various times

1920 „

leaving 980 stanzas,

which, being allotted among the three Editors, according to their respective contributions, gave:—

to Luke	extra	550	stanzas
to Matthew	„	370	„
to Mark	„	60	„

“These latter stanzas Sylvanus found had been drawn from other sources, such as the birth stories, the expansion of the resurrection stories, with sundry reminiscences collected most likely from the circle of Simon Peter or Matthew. Besides these, there are lurid pictures drawn from the popular apocalyptic literature describing the end of the world, &c., and incorporated in one or the other of these memoirs.

“You will see, therefore, that while there is necessarily a good deal of similarity among the three Editors, there is also in some respects a considerable difference. No doubt the latter has arisen because each of them had a different object in view in presenting the Messiah when compiling these memoirs,

but I have no time to go into this at present.

“Regarding your own early collection, I hear it is already getting very scarce—partly owing, no doubt, to so few copies having been written out at the time at Hazazon Tama, but even more so by most of these copies having been destroyed or lost during the late great commotions and rebellion against the Romans in the Holy Land.

“Allow me, however, to explain that in order to avoid repeating what others have already published, I have omitted all the parables found in the other three biographies, as well as the various discourses and sayings which go under the name of the Sermon on the Mount, with several other contributions. With the exception of introducing a few allegorical miracles, the whole of the miraculous events, including healings and cures reported in the three memoirs, have been omitted; likewise prophecies of an apocalyptic nature, which latter I am

convinced have been wrongly attributed to Jesus.

“All people, therefore, who read this work before us and just completed, will see that our Logos Gospel, which is the last Gospel, apart from a number of worthless miraculous and silly narratives, is quite a separate work, written upon quite different lines and for quite different purposes—a biography, let me say, which is spiritual, mystical, emblematical, and symbolical, or, if you like to so call it, a ‘philosophical and sacred romance,’ yet true to, and illustrative of, the heavenly principles upon which Jesus lived, taught, and died. This after all must be the main thing in such a biography, in order to do full justice to the Messiah and his mission as God’s representative upon earth. In short, it is a spiritual history, in which aspect, therefore, historical accuracy is not required; only a vital faith in the lofty and spiritual principles which underlie the presentation of Christ in this last Gospel biography, and which after all is the main thing.

“With reference, therefore, to this biography, it is widely different from the others, inasmuch as I have started from a higher standpoint than any of the others. My reason is the following:

“If you aim at the conversion of the heathen world, it is not enough to present to them Jesus as the expected King of the Jews, a paltry royalty of a paltry Kingdom about which the Gentile world is absolutely indifferent; nor is it sufficient to present Jesus merely as an example, or even as a sacrifice to procure for his followers the forgiveness of their sins, for with both of these the pagan worshippers think they are already amply provided in each of their own cults.

“Now you know that all their Saviours are believed to be of divine origin; hence it is absolutely necessary, if our faith is to triumph in the world, that Jesus must be presented to them—not only as being a divine Jewish Messiah incarnated, but also that, as such, he is in addition the highest of all Beings

in existence, namely, Jehovah's sole and perfect representative and vicegerent in Heaven and upon earth.

"This belief we find fully expounded in the Gnostic schools at Alexandria, where Jesus is now openly declared by his followers to have been the Divine Logos, not only as Philo taught, the creative Reason of God, or as the Stoics taught, the impersonal soul of the world; but, interesting to relate, these Gnostic Rabbis have personified Philo's abstraction and identified it with the Logos as incarnated in the person of Jesus, who thus becomes to them the visible human manifestation upon earth of Jehovah Himself.¹ In consequence

¹ The Logos theory was, that as a man's words are part of himself, and yet not the whole man, so the Logos was the expression of God. In one sense Divine and one with God, in another an incarnation in material form of the Divine — as sound is the material vesture of the spoken word. In modern thought, however, this idea is more correctly conveyed by the conception of God in his "immanency" in the world; for it retains better the Monotheistic belief, which is the foundation of all true Religion.

of this, we are now able to preach our Christ as higher in rank, power, and majesty than any other of the incarnate deities of the heathen—whether Hercules, Apollos, Dionysius, Serapis, or Mithra. In fact, I have proved to the Gentiles over and over again that these gods whom they worship are all inferior in character, power, and influence in every respect to our divine incarnate Logos, in whom all these lower Divine Beings must find their higher centre, their true fulfilment and realisation.

“You will therefore, no doubt, agree with me that this is the only aspect which will impress the pagans; and indeed it may be readily believed by them, for their own inferior divinities in whom they have hitherto believed are said to have each also, in various periods of the world’s history, come down upon earth to instruct their worshippers, and to save them from sin and its punishments by their own death. Nearly all these manifestations of pagan Divine Saviours go under the general name of ‘Christo-

cult,' *i.e.* the anointed saviours of each respective cult.¹

"Now, if you say that God was immanent and incarnate in Christ, it is quite as true to say that God is also, but of course in varying degrees, immanent and incarnate in all those who are endeavouring to live the Christ-life upon earth of love, service, and sacrifice.

"Well, upon this lofty claim I have been able to glorify 'our' Christ, or the Anointed One, and thereby made many converts amongst the Gentiles. More than this, I have preached our Christ as the world's coming Judge, who may return any day now in the clouds to

¹ The title "Christo" has come to have a variety of meanings. Thus it may stand for

a cosmic name,

a religious name,

an ideal name,

an ethical name,

a political name,

a social name,

Man's higher self—his Christo nature ;

or, in other words, the immanent God in His Highest aspect in the soul of man.

establish a new Heaven and earth reserved for all his own worshippers.

“This preaching of Christ as the judge of mankind, near at hand, has, I may say, made the greatest impression upon the various audiences which I have addressed from time to time; indeed, it has been the means of a large number of Gentiles coming over to our cult and receiving baptism, so you see that our cause prospers amazingly in this great city—and the reason of it.

“Indeed, so much is this the case, that after the last earthquake, when Apollo’s small temple was greatly damaged and a number of its leading worshippers, all being Greeks, fled the city and returned to Athens, I managed, by the aid of some wealthy converts, to secure the temple as it stood, at a low price. I got it repaired and consecrated to our worship, and have the satisfaction of knowing that in Ephesus we have the first pagan sanctuary consecrated to Christian worship. More than this, you will be glad to learn that the bulk of Apollo’s worshippers, besides converts from

other pagan cults, have gone over to our faith and received baptism.

“It has been necessary, of course, to adopt several of their ceremonial and ritual forms of worship, to which the converts have been accustomed all their lifetime; still, I admit there is a risk that in course of time objectionable pagan beliefs and religious ceremonials and sacraments may be introduced into the Christian Church, by which errors and gross superstition would be perpetuated, perhaps for many ages.

“Let me not forget to say that what most unexpectedly helped our cause a year or two ago was that, after the severe earthquake which did so much damage to Ephesus, and which we attributed to Jehovah’s chastisement on the citizens for their wickedness and idolatry, we had public prayers beseeching Christ to pardon the transgressors of his holy laws, and put a stop to this terrible visitation. By these services of intercessions for the whole district, we gained the goodwill of the frightened population, and many of them

were converted to our faith. More than this, when shortly after the earthquake there appeared the brilliant star of the east with its train of glory stretching over the heavens, it was evident to all common people, and confirmed by all astrologers and magicians, that this appearance of the new star presaged further tribulations over the world. The sight on the midnight sky was certainly awe-inspiring, so much so that all people were terror-stricken, and most of them expected that the world was now coming to an end.

“We Christians, however, gave a different explanation, for we looked upon the star as the forerunner of our Christ. You remember it is said that a brilliant star appeared when our Christ was born at Bethlehem, and now it was clear to us that this same wondrous heavenly messenger was the forerunner of our Christ’s second coming upon earth in his heavenly glory, in order to bring blessings, honours, and riches to all his worshippers and punishment over all who had despised or persecuted him and his people.

“During the height of the intense alarm of all people, we preached this divine message at every street corner and square, beseeching people to save their souls before the day of mercy was over, and lo! the number of gentile converts who flocked to us for protection, confessing their sins and asking for baptism, exceed all belief.

“Strange to say, most of the new converts prayed for some respite before the day of judgment and the Lord’s second coming, as they were afraid that they were hardly prepared yet, even after having got their sins absolved, to meet their new Lord and Master; hence we were prevailed upon to beseech God, both in public and private, to delay the Lord’s speedy coming. I am thankful to say that our fervent prayers appear to have been answered, for the awe-inspiring star shortly afterwards disappeared, and everything at present is going on in the usual way, although how long it will last no one can say; anyway, our Church is daily preparing for the speedy advent of the Lord.”

THE AUTHOR

REUBEN seemed amused, and asked whether Apollos had given the perusal of the Logos Gospel to any one at Ephesus. He replied in the affirmative, but said that the only one was to his Greek friend Sylvanus, whom he had asked to study the roll carefully, to give his opinion and then try to guess who would likely be its Author. He explained that Sylvanus, like himself, descended from the mixed marriage of a Jew and a Greek; hence, he was well acquainted with the Holy Scriptures and their sacred language.

Apollos continued:—"When Sylvanus returned the roll he said to me that of one thing he was certain, namely, that the bulk of the Gospel must have been written or dictated not by a Greek, but by a Jew—one, moreover, who had lived in the Holy Land, most likely in Judæa, and who was

intimately acquainted with the manners and customs of the Jews. My friend offered to give me proofs to confirm his opinion; and, strange to say, most of the suggestions and contributions you made from time to time, and with which I have woven the story, he unearthed quite successfully. Let me give you the conclusions he had arrived at.

“Thus he said that in the first place, although the work had been written in common Greek, it clearly betrayed by the style of its composition that the learned writer had conceived his ideas in the ancient Hebrew. Its literary style was evidently formed on Hebrew Scriptures, such as the Proverbs, &c. The Author also showed his Jewish bent of thought by being fond of parallel members to his sentences, placing an idea in contrast to its corresponding negative, quite in keeping with the style of learned Rabbis. He had also all along kept to the simple order of words peculiar to the Hebrew language. Its Greek vocabulary was limited and its syntax of the simplest. Another

Hebraic feature was the prominence given to the sacred numbers of seven and three.

“*2nd.* The Author had used Hebrew illustrations drawn from the Jews’ Holy Scriptures, which a Greek or Roman would not think of employing. Such were ‘the good and bad shepherds,’ which illustration seems to have been suggested by Ezek. xxxiv. 7-19, Jeremiah ii. 8. Again ‘the woman in labour’ had been drawn from Isaiah xxi. 3, and Hosea xiii. 13. In fact, the Author had shown a wide acquaintance with the Scriptures and had frequently quoted from them, both historical and prophetical.

“*3rd.* Again, my friend pointed out that the Author showed that he was quite familiar with other Jewish tendencies. All along he had given explanations of Jewish terms, customs, manners, opinions, and localities. As an illustration my friend pointed out that the Author knew the Jewish festivals, ab-lutions, and rituals, and he explained these to others who were not Jews. He also referred to the traffic carried on within the

precincts of the temple on the occasion of the Passover. He knew the punishment meted out by the Synagogues in cases of excommunication. He knew the controversies of the Jews, and knew also the low religious estimate in which mongrel Galilee was held in Jerusalem. He knew the various ruling parties, their dialectics and sophistry. He knew the common people's fanaticism and inclination to rebellion and tumult; their superstitious notions, with love of the miraculous and belief in demoniacal agencies. He also knew intimately the various Messianic expectations.

"4th. My friend had formed the opinion that the Author in all likelihood was a Jew belonging to the province of Judæa, for apparently he did not belong to Galilee, or to Samaria, or to Alexandria, or to Asia Minor. This was chiefly shown by his giving special prominence to the life and work of our Christ in Judæa and Jerusalem, probably because the Author knew these places most intimately.

“*5th.* This surmise is confirmed in other ways, for the Author had evidently a perfect knowledge of the temple, and as to the time of its erection. He knew familiarly the localities of Jerusalem. He had referred to the brook Kedron and its neighbourhood, he had defined Sichem as Jacob’s well, he had also alluded to the pool of Siloam and the pool of Bethesda with its five porches. He knew the mode of changing the appointment of the High Priests and the Roman rule. You find also that he had given the exact mode of computing the Jewish hours as followed in Palestine.

“*6th.* The Author had also given geographical explanations intended for outsiders, such as the necessity of passing through Samaria on the way from Judæa to Galilee, and that Bethany was nigh to Jerusalem about fifteen furlongs off. He had given the extent of the Sea of Tiberias, and explained that it and the Sea of Galilee are the same.

“*7th.* It was also seen that this Gospel had not been written for converted Jews only, but

for believers everywhere; hence there are translations inserted of Hebrew expressions, which only a Jew would think of giving to foreigners, such as that 'Rabbi' means teacher, 'Messiah' means Christ or Anointed. He had also explained names like Cephas, Silvani, Rabboni.

"8th. I asked Sylvanus if he could give some examples of what he had said—that the Author had given special prominence, as a learned Jew, to the sacred numbers of three and seven. 'Certainly,' he replied, 'I shall show you later on how the work is carefully planned upon these sacred numbers. Meantime, I shall point out to you in passing that three Passovers are recorded, and three other feasts, three visits to Galilee and three to Jerusalem, also three sayings on the Cross, besides which, Jesus is thrice condemned, and appears thrice after his resurrection. As for the Baptist, he makes three appearances as a witness-bearer.

" 'Again, there are seven miracles recorded, namely, the marriage feast at Cana, healing

the nobleman's son, the cure at Bethesda, feeding five thousand people, walking on the sea, curing the blind, and restoring Lazarus to life. Secondly, there are seven forms of testimony to Christ, viz. the witness of the Father, of Christ himself, of his works, of the Scriptures, of the Forerunner, of his own disciples, and, lastly, of the Holy Spirit. Thirdly, there are seven symbolic affirmations which Jesus Christ is said to have made regarding his mission, viz., he called himself "the bread of life," "the light of the world," "the door of the sheep," "the good shepherd," "the resurrection and the life," "the way," and "the true vine." There are also seven references to the "hour," also seven solemn asseverations: "These things I have spoken to you," and the formula "I am" occurs seven times. In short, both in its whole and in its parts, the work shows clearly traces of a carefully thought out plan or design.'

"9th. Sylvanus now changed the subject, and pointed out that the form of speeches put in the mouth of Jesus would betray the

Author as having been an Essene, and that in three different ways:—Firstly, his conception of the world was tinged by the view of the Zoroastrians, who believe in the apparent duality of existence; hence this cult looks upon the world as being under the rule of two opposing principles or beings, such as light and darkness, good and evil, Ormuzd and Ahriman, Matter and Spirit, &c. Secondly, like the Essenes, the Author has shown his strong sympathy with most of Philo's teaching, and this can be traced throughout the various diffuse discussions and obscure terminology—a scheme of dogmatic mysticism. In short, it is a mere ideal composition, where a few ideas are constantly reproduced—the result of Alexandrian Philosophy, which has been artistically interwoven on a fixed plan, or it may be called an artistic demonstration of a philosophical postulate. Thirdly, the language used in the teaching is to outsiders most peculiar. It is not what any ordinary Jew or even a Rabbi would use in daily conversation or teaching, but exactly what a

member of the Essenes secret society would be in the habit of using as a Mystic. The language is based upon the symbolic or figurative way of speaking in vogue among them; hence, only those who were members, trained in these mysteries, would know the actual meaning of many of Jesus' public utterances.

“I quite admit that in the peculiar circumstances in which Jesus was placed, he having claimed to be the spiritual Messiah, the precautions which he adopted so as to avoid being immediately arraigned before the Sanhedrin Court were quite justifiable. On the other hand, the disciples and other admirers of Jesus would take it as a matter of course that a celestial visitor like the incarnate Logos should speak in veiled language of the mysteries of the Kingdom of Heaven while addressing the multitudes which surrounded him at various times. It had, however, its drawbacks, for it frequently led to misunderstandings and false rumours of miracles having been performed by him. This was the case

not only during the lifetime of Jesus, but more especially after his death.

“My friend pointed out also that this work was evidently a supplement to the other Gospels; for the Author had left out all the parables, the sermon on the Mount, and the last prophetic discourses, probably because he knew that these had all been given before by others. My friend had found that this largely imaginative supplement consisted of discourses mostly in metaphorical language, which, however, as said, led to continuous misunderstandings. These related largely to the divinity of the Messiah, the personal and divine authority with which he was said to be invested by God; and it certainly revealed in matchless style the sublimity of his teaching in metaphors, which had to be interpreted spiritually in order to be properly understood by his hearers.”

Sylvanus summed up his remarks on the subject by saying to me:—

“I am, however, perfectly certain that the Author, or whoever assisted him to compose

these narratives and sayings attributed to Jesus, have drawn their material largely from the Wisdom and Mystic literature which has been current among the educated Jews for a century or more; and perhaps even more so from the voluminous writings of Philo, to which, however, time does not allow me to refer, with extracts from his works to show the parallel passages from which a large part of this spiritual biography has evidently been drawn.

“As you know, only a small part of the mystic and religious teaching in the Wisdom literature has so far been committed to writing, as the M.S. rolls are scarce and expensive; hence most of the Jewish students are being carefully trained in learning these by heart in their meeting-places, where the Rabbis are teaching them the wider problems of life and the secrets of God. Most of it is, in fact, a kind of gnosticising Judaism with its pretended illumination of the mind by the Spirit of God, which they believe brings perfect knowledge (gnosis) and

also an immediate relation to this Spirit of God.

“As you know, many of these mystic doctrines have been imported from the East upon the establishment of direct intercourse with Judæa, under the Ptolemies and Seleucides. The various colleges of the Megabyzæ and Essenes at Ephesus, likewise the Orphies of Thrace and Curets of Crete, bear witness in their teaching to the widespread acceptances of these doctrines. What is set forth in the Jewish Wisdom literature, and now partly reproduced in the biography before me in Greek terms, will no doubt be congenial to the Gentile culture of our own time. This work will therefore have a better chance of a ready entrance among the Gentile mystics than the earlier biographies, which are composed chiefly for the instruction and edification of the Jewish converts.”

Sylvanus said further:—“Let me go a little more into details to justify the opinion I have formed. Thus, I find that the Author has imbibed both Philo’s doctrine that the sole

intermediary between God and Man is the Logos, along with the Gnostic teaching of divine emanations, according to which it was possible in this spiritual biography to present the Logos as having appeared in the flesh and personified in Jesus, who is therefore represented as the eternal cause and source of creation—being the brightness of everlasting light and the image of God's goodness and mercy; the one moreover who is appointed to make all things new, &c. I need not enlarge, but, as stated, I am sure this teaching has provided the categories of this Gospel interpretation of the Messiah by the Author, conceived in this biography as the Logos of Philo and the Gnostics, and the Christo of the Heathens.

“Let me take a few random examples from Philo and the Wisdom or Gnostic literature to prove my assertion, and you know it has been current for more than a century—some portions, of course, being older than others. Thus, it is said at the commencement of your Logos Gospel: ‘The Logos was in the world, and the world was created by him.’

“This, I have been told by Gnostic teachers, has evidently been drawn from one of the writings of Alexandrian origin, which say: ‘The world was created by the Logos.’

“In another place it is said: ‘The Logos became flesh and tabernacled among us.’

“In one of the Odes there are these words: ‘The Logos tabernacled among us.’

“Again, it is said: ‘All things were made by the Logos, and without Him was not anything made that was made.’

“One of the Odes says: ‘There is nothing independent of the Logos, for He was before anything came into being. The world was made by His Logos and by the thought of his heart.’

“Again it is said:—‘Verily, I say unto you—Before Abraham was, I am.’ ‘Then took they up stones to cast at him,’ &c. This passage, I believe, has been partly suggested from the same literature, where you read:—

‘My birth was not like them and they sought for my death and did not find it, for I was older than any of their memorials, but

vainly did they seek to destroy the memory of him who was before them. The son of the Most High appeared in the perfection of His Father. He was known before the foundation of the world,' &c.

“Again, in another place it is said: ‘If I be lifted up from the earth, I will draw all men unto myself’ (*i.e.* a description of the world-wide reign of the Messiah).

“Now I was told that the same idea is found in one of these Odes: ‘And he (the Messiah) stood on a lofty summit and uttered His voice from one part of the earth to the other, and drew to Him all those who obey Him.’

“Once more: ‘The story of the walking on the water by the Messiah’ is found in another Ode:—

‘The rivers will be subject to you. The Lord has bridged them by His word, and He walked and crossed the water on foot and His footsteps stand firm on the water.’

“We also meet words evidently drawn from similar sources and used in a spiritual sense,

such as Life, Light, Truth, Knowledge, and Immortality. There is also found the expression of 'living water,' 'the door,' 'the Union with the Word and the love of the Word,' also spiritual metaphors of the bridegroom, wine, water, servants, &c.

"I shall now stop, but it is clear, from what the old Gnostic Rabbis explained to me, that the Author has freely selected materials from this and similar sources in order to illustrate these mystical conceptions under which he has presented Jesus in your spiritual biography."

Apollos closed by saying: "Let me add, in conclusion, that the title "The Anointed one, or the Christ," which has been applied by the Heathens to nearly all their celestial Saviours, may not inappropriately be also applied to Jesus, for the following reason—

"Let us use the title 'The Christ' to represent the consummation of a gradual, ever-growing incarnation of the immanent God in humanity; which has reached its culmination in the one who has most fully reflected the

beautiful and lovable character of God the Highest.

“To my mind, Jesus has gained this distinction by his beautiful life, teaching and self-sacrificing services, more or less idealised by his biographers. He is, and will therefore henceforth represent to humanity, the Ideal Man, the true Christ, the Divine life and love most fully expressed in humanity.

“As the Christ, Jesus transcends in his person, as now presented in this biography, all other and lower conceptions current among Gentile nations regarding the manifold Saviour Christos to whom worship has been paid by them for ages. But remember, if Jesus is the Christ: then in Humanity, the Christ spirit, as he conceived it, will also gradually permeate each soul to lift it up to closer and dearer fellowship with the Father and His son Jesus Christ, so that they all may be *one*.”

Reuben thanked Apollos for his remarks, and confessed that his friend Sylvanus had certainly proved by the examples given the correctness of his surmises; but while this was

so, had he also found out who was the likely Author?

“Yes,” said Apollos, “very nearly so; at any rate he argued this query as follows:—

“While the Author has evidently been a Palestine Jew, it is clear to me that he was not a Sadducee, or a Pharisee, or a Scribe, or a lawyer, or any of the lower uncultivated sects like Nazarenes, Sicarii, or Ebionites. He must have been one outside the orthodox circle of Jewish believers, and yet a learned and most pious and spiritual Rabbi.

“This is also gathered by expressions which are not likely to have been used by a patriotic Jew speaking in the ordinary way to his countrymen in Judæa, but might very well have been written down by an outsider—say an Essene; or even by a converted Greek like yourself, who might live at a distance and who would look upon the Jews and refer to their customs as an outsider would do. There are also places where Jesus speaks of the feasts of the ‘Jews’; and at another time he refers his hearers to ‘your laws,’

instead of 'our laws,' as if he was not a Jew himself. These are perhaps trifles; still, they serve as a key to find out who wrote these memoirs. In other places Jesus is also made to speak as an outsider of the Jewish faith. Thus you hear of the feasts of the *Jews*; of the passover of the *Jews*; of the manner of the purifying of the *Jews*; of the *Jews*' feast of tabernacles; as the manner of the *Jews* is, of the *Jews*' preparation day, and so forth. All these expressions seem to show that the writer was not an orthodox Jew, but an outsider, or one who had dissociated himself from the orthodox Jews; as, for instance, an Essene monk might have done.

"Another thing I have noticed is, that Caiaphas is said to be the High Priest that 'same' year. Now, from what I have heard, it is incorrect to have used such a phrase, because the office of High Priest was not, at that time, held from year to year. Joseph Caiaphas, son-in-law of Annas, was the acting High Priest during the whole of Pilate's

administration, say from A.D. 24 until quite lately. The successor of Pilate, namely Vitellius, has removed Caiaphas. This, I am told, was one of his first acts on taking up the government of Judæa.

“Such a slip, however, might easily have been made by an outsider or a recluse like an Essene, but not likely by a well-informed Jew in Palestine. Altogether, in studying these rolls, I have noticed various defects of composition, as if the Editor had come into possession of a miscellaneous collection of logia attributed to Jesus, with which he was at time in doubt how best to fit them into their proper places in the narrative.

“On the other hand, as said, upon the foundation of some of the genuine but detached sayings of Jesus, the Editor, or whoever was the Author, has built up the beautiful and amplified discourses which meet us in the memoirs towards the end of the career of Jesus. These discourses bear the stamp of having been written not by a Greek or a Roman, but by a spiritual-minded Jew who

belonged to one of their mystical schools—which, we all know, have a large following in the Holy Land.”

My friend closed by saying:—“If therefore I should make a guess, I would say that the Author in all probability would be a Jew of the pious Essene faith—not one, however, who lived in Alexandria or Asia Minor, as being too far from the scene of action; but one who, from his intimate knowledge of Judæa and its people, dwelt in Palestine, and most probably at the headquarters of Hazazon Tama—which used to shelter for ages so many scholarly, noble and mystic Jews, who had retired from the world, many of whom were also known to be great admirers of the mystical and allegorical school, of whom its noblest representative was Philo. Lastly, among all these learned men at Hazazon Tama, the best known, the wisest, the most spiritual and gifted brother was the late beloved Superior, who, I believe, was a guide, teacher, and intimate friend of Jesus Christ. Therefore to this excellent man, known as ‘John the

Divine Teacher,' I would ascribe the authorship, if not of the whole, certainly of the deepest and most sublime portions."

Reuben was greatly pleased at the ingenious way in which Apollos' friend had penetrated the secrecy of the Authorship, but it was arranged that except calling the work after the name of John the Divine, the co-author and the compiler were to be kept in the background; so that the late beloved Superior might have all the honour as a fitting tribute to his memory.

The next day Apollos resumed the conversation by saying:—"Concerning the spiritual biography, briefly speaking, it may be used in a threefold way:—

1st, in its narrative form ;

2nd, in its symbolic form ;

3rd, in its dramatic form.

I think in all these aspects the spiritual biography will be found instructive, uplifting, and suitable to the lowest capacity as well as to the highest intellects, whether mystics

or philosophers. It should be the best manual wherewith to influence and convert the world to Christ."

Reuben here interrupted, and said:—"I have followed your words with the greatest interest, but before you go further will you kindly tell me what you mean by having the memoirs of Jesus presented also in a 'dramatic form'? Why should this be done, and how?"

Apollos replied:—"Oh, you learned men, you great philosophers, you live so much in the abstract world and in the monastic environments, that you know little of what passes in the daily life of those who belong to other creeds than the Essenes. You ought to know that the wise Greeks found long ago that the best friend of religion was Art, in its various activities, whether as Sculpture, Painting, Poetry, Oratory, Song, Dance or Music; but, above them all, because embracing the whole, they placed the Drama. And therefore the religious instructions of the Greeks consist to this day chiefly of Dramatic performances, in use everywhere, whether in Greece, Italy,

or Asia. Indeed, most of the other ancient cults have likewise followed the example of Greece in this respect.

“You find, therefore, that miracle plays or sacred dramatic performances are acted regularly in all large cities, especially at certain sacred seasons—where is presented their respective Gods and divine Protectors’ exploits upon earth, for the good of humanity, closing uniformly with their cruel sufferings, their death, their resurrections and ascensions to Heaven. At other times there are given on the stage recitations or fervid addresses, made in honour of their divinities; which sometimes last for many hours, and people flock to all such performances. Indeed, this mode of conveying instructions has been found, by long experience, to be the most potent means of influencing for good the morals and character of the worshippers who frequented these plays.

“Now if we come to the late worship of Apollo in Ephesus, the drama was one of its outstanding features, and was of perennial interest to young and old. Certainly the effect

was beneficial and elevating. I have often witnessed these performances. There were solemn processions, symbolic illustrations, events were depicted by tableaux and acting. There were sacred songs and music, sacred dances, recitations and eloquent appeals to rouse the audiences; in short, these dramatic performances have become for many ages the handmaid of religion and a most important factor.

“Now here is the point. If we are to retain our hold upon the new Gentile converts, we must take the lesson to heart which the wise Greeks taught us, and introduce also in our Worship the Sacred Drama as a powerful aid in the worship of the Christians. For this reason we may very well ask God’s blessing on our efforts in that direction, and for the spread of His Gospel.”

Reuben replied :—“I quite appreciate your remarks, and see no harm in utilising the Drama in the service of the Christian Church; still, it puzzled me to know how you have been able to do it in the biography of our

Saviour. I have often heard of the mystic rites and dramatic performances in connection with the death, resurrection, and ascension of their respective deities; but the other Greek plays to which you refer, I have not witnessed—because as an Essene it is against our principle to attend such performances, whether for mirth or for religious instructions.”

Apollos said:—“Well, I was born a Greek, and as such have been accustomed since childhood to frequent and admire religious performances. I see the enormous importance of utilising this noble art of the Drama to the edification of people and the extension of the Christian cult. If the converted Jews or Essenes shun this aid to a holy and cheerful life, lo! we turn to the Gentile converts, to whom it is sure to be a power for good.”

Apollos continued:—“Now I shall tell you how I have dramatised this spiritual biography which begins and ends in mysticism and symbolism. We may call it:—

The Drama of the Logos.

“Like the classic Greek Tragedies, it has a threefold division:—

1st. The Prologue.

2nd. The Acts.

3rd. The Epilogue.

Let me give you the skeleton outline of its dramatisation. The drama is introduced and takes place according to the highest degree of initiation called by the Mystics, *Teleiotheis Egeneto*; hence the Prologue is laid in heaven, and is opened by the proclamation of the celestial venerable leader in the ceremony, called *Archegos*,¹ before the assembled Universe. He announces, in a few pregnant words, the advent of the Logos upon earth, which is now to take place in human form, extolling him as the first-born Son of God and as the vicegerent of God through whom the world

¹ In the Greek Tragedies, the *Archegos* stood on the stage, surrounded and supported by a numerous chorus. His duty was to disentangle the plot and explain the motives to the audience, mingling comments with the actors' discourses, &c. In the above drama the same rule is observed, if it is studied carefully.

was created. He is also, as Philo taught, the 'Revealer' of God's exalted and beautiful character, whom he personifies upon earth; moreover, he is presented as Philo conceived it, as the heavenly High Priest, who is the intercessor in heaven and earth for the world's salvation; lastly, like the Divine Ormuzd of the Zoroastrians' faith, he is the 'light and life of men.'

"Observe, therefore, how in these various Acts the Logos 'reveals' himself dramatically by words and deeds.

1ST ACT, IN SEVEN SCENES

"*1st Scene.* The advent upon earth of the Logos from Heaven, incarnated in Jesus, is the next announcement made—this time by the greatest of the living Prophets, namely, John the Baptist, in fulfilment of old Testament prophecies.

This is followed by other testimonies of disciples and testimonies by the miracles of Jesus."

Reuben, interrupting, said :—"You refer to John the Baptist. Please explain a little more about him before you go further."

"Well," said Apollos, "it was necessary, considering the great hold which John the Baptist in those days had upon the imagination of the public, to introduce him in these memoirs in a prominent way; as if he had been one of the Hierophants in the sacred mystery plays performed all over the Roman Empire, whose duty it is to introduce the leading Actor. I have therefore brought him forward in the opening act as the most important 'witness bearer,' appointed by God to reveal the mission and transcendent dignity of Jesus the eternal Christ, and thus glorify him to the world.

"As said already, in this spiritual biography we do not want merely a prophet, a teacher, a healer, a miracle-worker, even a King, but the object is to present Jesus our Christ as being higher than any or all of the Heathen divinities or Christo Myths whom they worship. We must therefore present John the

Baptist as giving his authoritative testimony; namely, that Jesus was not only the expected Jewish Messiah, but, above all, that he was the Logos of the Highest, the Son of God, and therefore, as such, he was chosen from eternity to become the world's spiritual Sacrifice and Saviour, of whom therefore all upon earth must stand in holiest awe.

“This I have brought out in connection with the mission of John the Baptist. It was all the more necessary to do this, seeing that a section of the Jews were at first under the impression that John was the expected Messiah. They had, however, to be weaned from this erroneous belief; and in studying the opening of the first Act, you will see how this has been done. Even more than this, mark the profound self-abasement of John in referring to the celestial Logos. A well-known proverb is introduced, which strikingly reveals his deep humility and reverence in the presence of Jesus: ‘He—whose shoe-latches I am not worthy to unloose.’ This was the work of a common

slave; but even to this humble duty, John is depicted as feeling himself unworthy, in presence of the divine glory and majesty of the incarnate Logos.

“Indeed, the whole biography before you is an interpretation of the inner life of the Logos; a conception at the root of which lies, not so much actual history or tradition, as the joint testimonies of the celestial Hierophant and of John the Baptist. This was introduced, in order thereby to vindicate the earthly mission of Jesus, and at the same time accord him the divine honours to which they announced that he was entitled. You will find therefore that the key to every speech and every miracle is the great announcement with which the Prologue opens, and which has been confirmed by the forerunner of the Messiah.

“It follows therefore—and this is of the highest importance—that the spiritual mission of Jesus Christ belongs to a wider sphere than Judaism, even to the whole wide world. But I need not enlarge.

“You will remember that among the poor Ebionites in Judæa, it was at the time firmly believed that Jesus had joined their society to become a life member; and that in consequence, and as a public confirmation of it, he submitted to be baptized by John. I believe this is absolutely correct, but when narrating this important and revolutionary step, the compilers of the life of Jesus have added, that when Jesus was baptized, and as he went up out of the water, the heavens were opened and the Spirit of God descended in a bodily shape like a dove, and lighted upon Jesus, and lo! a voice from heaven said ‘This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.’

“Now, this beautiful little symbolical incident is found in the other three Gospels, Mark, Matthew, and Luke, practically all alike; evidently drawn from the same original source, and all of them employed as an introduction to Jesus’ public ministry. I was therefore bound to follow their example, and utilise this to me imaginative incident for

my purpose—nay, even enlarging it. In our Gospel therefore, as said, John the Baptist is likewise made to appear as the most important witness-bearer or herald, chosen by Heaven to proclaim the majesty and the divine authority of Jesus. In short, the Baptist's testimony covers the whole field of Jesus' activity as the Logos or spiritual Messiah, and as such you will find that I have made him use the emphatic word 'I' not less than 117 times in his biography; thus making him speak all the time with a divine authority, and with the dignity of a Divine Being.

"You will also find that I have made the Baptist proclaim the pre-existence of Jesus in his heavenly glory, as the one who has willingly come down upon earth in human form and under condition of time; but who is yet, as Enoch also taught, the celestial being, the elect one, who existed from the first with the Most High, yet who would one day be revealed upon the earth and afterwards be seen sitting on the throne of his glory.

"Furthermore, the exalted character of

Jesus, by which he proves his spiritual Messiahship, is declared by the Baptist in a threefold manner :—

1st, as *Grace*, which is the manifestation of undeserved Divine Love :

2nd, as *Truth*, which is the manifestation of Divine light, to chase away errors :

3rd, as *Mercy*, to bring the spiritual sacrifice :—which entitled him to be called in a figure of speech, ‘the Lamb of God,’ and by which the sins and rebellious spirit of the world are taken away for ever. By the ‘salvation of the world’ is therefore meant the soul’s transformation into the divine likeness, and only Heaven’s mercy, grace and truth, as revealed in Jesus, can bring this about.

“I need, however, say nothing further at present on this head ; but, with your permission I will proceed to the other parts of the Drama.”

Reuben said : “Thanks for your explanation. There is, however, one more question I should like to put. It is regarding the reported miracle which took place at the baptism of Jesus. You say that this is found in the

other three Gospels, and that you surmise that there is a common source from which it has been derived by these three compilers. Tell me, therefore, have you any idea of the origin of such a myth, for I cannot believe it has been an actual occurrence?"

Apollon replied: "I quite share your opinion. The explanation I would give is, that the conception has been drawn, in the first place, from one of the Jewish psalters—which, however, you may not know, as it is not among the Psalms of David; but nevertheless there are many favourite odes or psalters in use among the Jews in Palestine, and used mostly for private devotion. In the Wisdom Literature you find many of them are still preserved in writing; and, so far as I remember, there are about forty odes in one collection, which I believe is the one best known and most in use. "Now, in one of these there is a poetic description of the 'holy dove' fluttering over the head of the anointed One, uttering his praise to the world. You will see how this imagery compares closely to the Gospel

narratives. The 'dove,' you will remember, represented in the cult of the ancient Phœnicians and others, the divine messenger of the Gods sent down upon earth to deliver its celestial messages.¹ Hence this beautiful symbol has found its way, in course of ages, among the Jewish sacred poems. You can therefore easily understand how appropriate this symbol of a 'heavenly dove' was to the recorder of the baptism of Jesus, and how beautifully he or others after him have woven it into the actual event; when he wished to portray in a symbol that Jesus, in taking up his divine mission, did so with the full approval of his Heavenly Father.

"This figurative language, let me further add, has likely also been partly derived from Philo, who in his writings, you may remember, symbolises the 'Spirit of God' by 'a dove.'

¹ Let me remind you that once there was a wide spread "dove cult" as a divine symbol in connection with the worship of the Syrian Mother Goddess Astaroth. The dove always accompanied her, to whom was entrusted messages to be sent to her worshippers; hence, the dove was a sacred bird and was never molested or killed.

Now the dove in the East is a symbol of tenderness, purity and innocence; hence you will find this beautiful image used at the Baptism: 'And the Holy Ghost descended in a bodily shape like a *dove* upon Jesus—and a voice came from heaven,' &c.

"The belief in the 'Bath Kol,' or 'the voice from heaven,' which is also described at times as being accompanied by fire, wind, or thunder, is likewise found in Philo's writings, and is in fact common in Jewish tradition.

"This 'Bath Kol' represents, as you know, to the later schools of Rabbis, the Spirit of Prophecy, which is also called the Holy Ghost or the Spirit of God. This is said sometimes to speak in an audible voice from heaven, and at other times to speak in the hearts of men, with secret intimations, suggestions or inspiring thoughts; hence you will find Mark has used it in the latter sense (xiii. 11): 'Take no thought beforehand what ye shall speak, neither do ye premeditate; but whatsoever shall be given you in that hour that speak ye, for it is not ye that speak, but the Holy Ghost.'

“With reference to these outside Jewish Psalters, my own opinion is that not unlikely many of these will in course of time find their way into the Christian worship by Jewish converts, with many of whom they are great favourites; hence not unlikely they may by-and-by be enlarged, and adapted to the service of the new sect by interpolations and otherwise.

“I need, however, say nothing further at present on this head, but with your permission will proceed to the other parts of the Drama.

“In doing so, let me again remind you that throughout the various acts of this Drama, with their typical incidents, allegorical speeches and symbolical miracles, my uppermost thought, in conformity with the late Superior’s express wish, has been thereby to convince the world, that Jesus, during his earthly life, revealed from the start of his mission his divine glory, as the Logos of the Greeks, as ‘the Christos of the Heathens, and as the Messiah of the Jews.

“I claim, therefore, that in this spiritual biography I have presented Jesus as the

world's spiritual Saviour, who brought in the true religion of humanity—by basing it upon love, service and sacrifice; all of which Jesus exemplified throughout his beautiful life upon earth, and by his terrible death on the Cross.

“Now you will find that in the two first acts, with their fourteen scenes, Jesus is seen ‘revealing’ himself in different ways to the world, as the Logos, in his divine majesty and power.

“In this spiritual biography, you will easily understand, it was absolutely necessary, if the world was to be converted, that not only by words, but also by mighty deeds, should Jesus be made to show his pre-eminence. In other words, as said, he had to reveal himself not only as the spiritual Messiah of the Jews, but also as the spiritual Christo of the Pagans; and, above all, as the spiritual Logos of the Greek, Alexandrian and Gnostic Philosophical schools, which now dominate the whole thinking world, and point the way through the Logos to the absolute truth for which the world is groping.

“In this manner you will observe that the spiritual religion which Jesus came to introduce will fulfil and sum up the truth of all other faiths of the world; making it, indeed, the only true universal religion for the perfection and glory of the whole human race.

“Mark this, however: its efficacy will only be seen in its fullest beauty as long as it is held in its simplicity, in its purity, and in its spirituality.

“In its broad, general principles, it may be applied to every situation and to the solving of every problem in human life and society, as also in the soul’s quest for Immortality.

“But after this excursion, let us now come back to our subject at hand. If you listen to me closely, I will show you that in every one of the following fourteen scenes of the Drama Jesus has been made to ‘reveal’ himself as a supernatural Being. Thus in the

2nd Scene. Jesus chooses his disciples and
reveals his Omniscience in the
 case of Simon and Nathanael.

3rd Scene. Marriage in Cana, turning water into wine, and thereby *revealing* his miraculous powers over Nature as its Creator.

4th Scene. Cleansing the Temple, because the latter was a symbol of Jehovah's lofty dwelling place, hence Jesus protests against it being profaned for mercenary purposes. After this he *reveals* his divinity, by claiming having power to lay down his own life and take it again.

5th Scene. Jesus meeting with Nicodemus. He *reveals* the meaning of the new birth, and *reveals* also the great love of God towards the world.

6th Scene. Jesus meeting the woman at the well, *reveals* the true and spiritual worship of God; thereafter, from a distance, restores to health the dying child of a nobleman at Capernaum.

7th Scene. Jesus cures also the man at the pool of Bethesda; there-
after *reveals* himself as the Son of God, thus proving himself by these two miracles to be the promised Messiah, who had come to cast out the evil spirits which caused all manner of diseases and afflictions, bodily and mental, among the sons of men.

2ND ACT, IN 7 SCENES

1st Scene. Jesus feedeth 5000 men with loaves and fishes, and *revealeth* himself to them as the bread of life. Jesus walketh on the sea. It was in this miraculous manner that poets and prophets had proclaimed that God would *reveal* His presence upon earth. See Job ix. 8, Psalm lxxvii.

19, Isaiah xliii. 16; hence by this miracle Jesus *revealeth* his divinity, as having power over the whole of Nature.

2nd Scene. Jesus *revealeth* himself as the giver of the Holy Spirit.

3rd Scene. Jesus *revealeth* himself as the light of the world.

4th Scene. Jesus restoreth sight to the blind. *Revealeth* himself as a miracle worker who has power over the evil spirit of blindness (sometimes called Asmodeus).

5th Scene. Jesus *revealeth* himself as the heavenly shepherd, also as being one with the Father.

6th Scene. Jesus raiseth Lazarus from the dead, thereby *revealeth* himself as the Conqueror over the prince of death and Hades.

7th Scene. Jesus entered Jerusalem and *revealeth* himself as the world's spiritual sacrifice.

3RD ACT. THE CLOSING SCENES

1st Scene. The last supper.

2nd Scene. Jesus' farewell address to his disciples.

3rd Scene. Jesus comforted his disciples.

4th Scene. Jesus' intercessory prayer.

5th Scene. Jesus' arrestment and trial.

6th Scene. Jesus' crucifixion and death.

7th Scene. Jesus' resurrection.

EPILOGUE

Jesus' appearance to his disciples.

Apollos now asked Reuben if he had any remarks to make. Reuben replied that, to judge from the outline, such a dramatic performance, if reverently given, would be very interesting and impressive; indeed, where one learned person was able to read the biography in Greek, or have it expounded at their religious services by catechists, there would be hundreds of unlearned persons in Ephesus who would enjoy intensely the acted representation of this sacred "Drama

of Redemption," and benefit by it for their soul's salvation and growth in the Christian graces.

Reuben continued:—"But tell me what leading principle has guided you in the composition of this work?"

Apollos said:—"Our late revered Superior struck the keynote in his beautiful addresses which I have had to alter somewhat; and it is upon these that the rest has been made to fit in. From start to finish you will find it represented that it is the incarnate God who appears, who foreknows and foretells his passion, his death and his resurrection; hence also the ministry of the incarnate Logos was one long exhibition of divine power, fighting and conquering the demons of darkness, of disease and even of death. It is no doubt the same in the other stories of dying and rising Saviour Gods, but see what a difference! The lives of the other divine Saviours were glorified men and women with all the frailties, evil propensities and passions of mortals; and therefore they were no safe

example to follow. But in the incarnate Logos you see God's character revealed in all His matchless perfections, in His loftiest beauty, in His loving fatherhood and tender mercies ; in short, the highest Ideal the soul can conceive.

“ As you read the biography, you witness also the Messiah's deeds of mercies, and you listen to his words of love and sympathy. You read here also, as introduced by our late Superior, what intimate and loving relations existed between God the Father and the Logos His son. In his words and addresses, you see the Logos revealed as the Heavenly High Priest, as the victim suffering on behalf of others ; yet as the conqueror over sin, over death and over Satan. You see him also as Ormuzd, who was worshipped as the giver of ‘light and of life of men.’ He was a ‘revealer,’ moreover, of God's dear and close relationship with humanity, of the close and loving oneness which exists between God, Christ and Humanity ; and lastly, you see the Logos removing the dark curtain which

hides the future from humanity, revealing the immortality of the soul and its eternal blessedness."

Reuben said: "I admit that all this is worked out very beautifully; but on comparing this spiritual biography with the others, I find you leave out many important events in the Life of Jesus. Why so?"

Apollos said: "The reason is the same as that which has guided me all along. We have to present the life and doings of a Divine Being, the Son of God; hence there is no room in our Gospel to insert the story of Mary's conception by the Holy Ghost, or that a virgin had brought forth the Messiah, or to give his genealogy. The Logos from heaven of whom our biography treats, needs no such miraculous stories to be introduced. He is himself life everlasting, and takes a human form when and how he chooses.

"(2) I have laid no stress on his earthly relations or upbringing, because with the Logos the only relation of importance is a spiritual one.

“(3) I have also omitted the baptism by John, and merely allowed John as a subordinate to recognise him as the Messiah—just as a herald might proclaim the advent of a king; hence, the Logos in His majesty moves independently of the Baptist.

“(4) I have also omitted the ‘temptation in the wilderness,’ because the divine Logos cannot be tempted by the Evil One or come into contact with unclean Spirits.

“(5) The other Editors present Jesus as wishing to conceal his Messiahship; not so have I presented the Logos, for in his lofty Majesty he would boldly proclaim who he was.

“(6) The other Editors presented Jesus as preaching the Kingdom of Heaven, whereas as the Logos I have made Him constantly point to Himself as the King of Heaven.

“(7) The miracles are intended to be allegories, not actual events, thus by multiplying the bread is meant that he is himself the heavenly manna. You read that he restored sight to a blind man, but it means in the

allegorical sense that in the Logos we can only see God's invisible glory.

“(8) I have made the Logos eat no paschal meal, because he was himself as the Logos, the type of the paschal lamb.

“Again, I have left out the institution of the Lord's Supper, because what is more important is the teaching of the Logos, who gives spirit and life, allegorically called ‘meat and drink,’ to the famishing soul.

“(9) In our spiritual biography there is no agony in Gethsemane as described by the other Editors, nor is there a cry by Jesus on the cross, of God having forsaken him; because not in this craven spirit must the Logos from Heaven leave the earth. On the contrary, I have made the Son of God walk in calm majesty to the cross, which is the road to his glorification; hence there is no necessity to describe an ascension after forty days. The Divine Logos lays down his life and takes it again, ascending to his glory when and how he please. For the same reason the allegorical narrative of the ‘Trans-

figuration' is also left out; because Jesus as the Logos even upon earth must have been invested with a heavenly glory, which would be always manifested in his words and works.

"In everything, therefore, we must bring on the scene of action a Divine Being, and make him act in conformity with his high calling; invest him with a divine glory, and show that the Logos was a partaker of the divine essence, and that therefore his life upon earth had a divine meaning and a spiritual significance.

"I need not, however, multiply examples of the plan I have followed.

"Let me sum up by saying that I am convinced that this spiritual biography in which Jesus is set forth as the Logos from Heaven, is absolutely necessary, if the new creed is to win its way among the nations of the earth.

"It is all very well for the other Editors to have proclaimed Jesus to the Jews in the threefold character as a Prophet, a Redeemer and a King; but our experience so far is,

that the Jews will pay little heed to the Messiahship of Jesus if that is all. As you know, the patriotic Jews look with impatience for a king of war and conquests—not for a king of peace and righteousness, who will quietly allow the hated Romans to remain masters of the country.

“My own feeling is, that in the long run the memoirs of Jesus, and the messages these contained, will be received, especially in Palestine, with indifference and neglect, even with violent opposition, by the majority of the Jews; and therefore die a natural death, with so many other attempts of introducing the expected Messiah to the popular favour of the Jews.

“In these circumstances I admire Paul for his broad, statesmanlike grasp of the situation. He is thus like our revered Superior of the Essenes, of blessed memory, who, as the originating genius of this spiritual biography, has found the true solution—that by which it may become a world-wide religion—the *warship of the ideal*. Now, the true Messiah,

by which the world can only be saved, is not earth-born, but must be a Divine Being; because without the apotheosis of the divine in human form, at least ideally, to which the Gentiles have been accustomed for ages, they cannot be won over to the higher faith which we preach. The truth underlying the Gentiles' creeds is that Divinity incarnate may also be found upon earth. In a sense they are right. The only mistake is, in not having apprehended what is truly meant by Divinity. This mistake is rectified in our creed, which thereby introduces at last the perfect religion of humanity. You know that we postulate :

“1st. That God's true character is only fully presented as ‘Love’ in all its fulness—not a selfish, self-contained Nature; nay, the very opposite. It is a Love which is wide and deep as the Universe itself—a divine love which embraces all, serves and blesses all, sacrifices itself for all, in order to raise all up to higher perfections, happiness, and to a reciprocating love.

“2nd. This sublime, almighty love is re-

vealed in all its fulness and delight, as the love of a father of tender mercy and grace; hence the Fatherhood of God solves all life's mysteries, and brings heaven and happiness within sight of every child of God.

“*3rd.* By being God's children, humanity also becomes like their Heavenly Father ‘Divine,’ and hence it follows that the one who in this life has most fully revealed God as the Father in His beautiful, attractive and perfect character of Love and Mercy, who has made the revelation not only by words but by deeds of love, service and sacrifice, even unto death: that this one should be accepted as the true Divine revealer of God—the Logos incarnate—in short, the son of a God of Love.

“This, in short, you see is our justification for handling the subject in the sublime manner in which it has been done. I am convinced that only in this way will the Gentile world, with its untold myriads of worshippers, be made by-and-by to accept Jesus as their Saviour, their example, and

the object of their love and admiration to the end of time.

“While we may all be children of the Highest—all ‘divine,’ at least in potentiality—we see in Jesus, idealised though it may be to some extent, the ‘divine’ in the highest manifestation known upon earth—being the true revealer of God in His perfections, even as our loving Heavenly Father.

“You see, therefore, that the incarnate Logos, as we have interpreted him in this spiritual biography, stands for the ultimate and final expression of God’s beautiful and sublime nature—full of active love, affection and sympathy for humanity in its struggles towards a higher life.

“In consequence of this, we have presented Jesus Christ to the world as the last and complete revelation of God’s grace, favour and truth: whose words brought life, hope, comfort, happiness, and peace to all who listened to him—glad tidings indeed to the whole wide world, of God being our Father of Love, whose

children should live in Love to Him and to one another.

“The mission upon earth of Jesus Christ, the incarnate Logos, will therefore be better realised, and more highly appreciated, as ages roll on, bringing with them the promised social heaven upon earth, of which our Messiah is the true corner-stone, and therefore to whom shall be for ever all the praise and all the glory.

“Once more, if humanity is looked upon as a divine organism, we willingly and joyfully accept Jesus the Logos, God’s dear Son and our Saviour and Guide, as the head of this vast organism, to whom we stand in a loving and indissoluble relation, but let us remember, in human society, as indeed in the whole of Nature, there are relations of varying values.

“While it is true, therefore, that we are divine, let us also remember that we are not all divine to the same degree, nor have any reached the perfection or likeness to God’s beautiful character and life which Jesus is reported as having realised. Still, the divine

oneness between God and Man, and between Man and the Logos, will always remain, and will be an everlasting joy and glory to all his followers."

Reuben said:—"I quite agree with you, and I believe, whether this biography reads as a narrative or is produced as a sacred drama, that in either case it will be found to be by far the best and noblest memoir of our Christ, where the recorded external events are but the embodiments or illustrations of spiritual realities. I therefore tender you my warmest thanks for your labour of love, which is the greatest gift your genius and devout spirit could have given to the Christian Church. There is one thing more I would suggest, and that is, that with your permission we ought to call the work: 'the Gospel by John the Divine,' in commemoration of our late beloved Superior, whose contribution to it will ever be a monument of his learning and lofty spirituality."

Apollos was quite agreeable and enthusiastic about it, and they agreed on the following

day to go once more thoroughly into the details of the whole work, when Apollos would explain the sources from which he had drawn various incidents, including the Satine Khamuas or ancient Egyptian folk tales, *c.* 1200 B.C., of the life of Si-Osiri, the Son of God, from which source Luke had also apparently derived his story of "Dives and Lazarus," also "Jesus questioning the doctors in the temple," &c.; and lastly, he invited criticism from his friend in order to improve upon it as a whole if possible.

Before they rose to make some calls, Reuben said:—"By-the-bye, there is another thing you might explain to me before we leave, and that is, in what sense did you use the sentence, 'the symbolic form,' in which the biography could be studied?"

Apollos said:—"Yes, I forgot to take up this most important point, but will do it now. Let me give you a few examples. The biography we have before us can only be fully understood, as mentioned already, if you find the inner meaning of each event.

As you know, it is not a literal biography, but is cast in a figurative or allegorical form; being, as said, an interpretation of the inner life of the Logos. Moreover, his message is translated into terms congenial to the Gentile culture around us. Thus every miracle is to the mystics a parable with a spiritual lesson. Hence in the case of the feeding of the multitude with bread, this reported miracle, if properly understood, is a symbol of Christ as the bread of life. The reported raising of Lazarus is a symbol of Jesus being the resurrection and the life. The water of Jacob's well is utilised as a symbol of the Holy Spirit, which springs up into eternal life in the soul.

“Thus you may treat the rest of the reported miracles in the same way, and find that each of them stands as a mere symbol or parable of the spiritual life. You will observe that Jesus himself has spiritualised the significance of the Jewish observances and ceremonies; hence behind the plain narratives or discourses you may find, if you

seek for it, the higher truth, the spiritual meaning, and which after all is the true object of this biography. In the same way, you may take the leading events reported of the life of Messiah and use them as symbols of Humanity, or of each separate soul. Thus :

The Birth of Jesus—prefigures that the Logos must be incarnate in every soul to make it divine.

The Holy Life of Jesus—prefigures that the Logos life of holiness must be reproduced in every soul, to make us sons of God.

The Crucifixion and Death of Jesus—prefigures that every soul must die to sin, by the crucifying of its evil and sinful desires. In other words, it must die to its lesser or separate selfhood, in order to rise again in the glory of the larger and more complete life.

The Resurrection of Jesus—prefigures that every soul must rise from the grave of its lower nature to the newness of spiritual life.

“Let us also believe in the triumphant resurrection of the good and noble that lies buried under human passions, selfishness and ignorance.

“Shortly, the symbolic form has been used in manifold ways by the mystics. Thus, take lastly the current conception of—

“*Christ's Second Coming.* The expected return of Jesus after his death, in a bodily form, which belief is so extensively held by nearly all his followers, is one to which I cannot subscribe. In my opinion, it can only mean a spiritual return, such as Christ's spiritual abode in the heart of his followers,—followed in course of ages, by his Spirit of love and sacrifice coming to dwell in the whole of humanity. This idea has a practical aspect: for it will mean the solution of all social and religious problems, because an enduring civilisation can only be established by enthroning love as the dynamic principle.

“Love alone will be able to transform human nature, calling it from the grave of its dead self and raise it up to become the

full and perfect expression of the Divine life of love to God and to Man. We may say in truth that it was for this purpose that Jesus lived upon earth, died, and is still living in the soul of humanity, until his divine work of grace and glory on their behalf is accomplished.

“I need not enlarge, but the above examples will show you how the symbolic representations of the life, death and resurrection of Christ have been used in different ways, and may still be of considerable use, in teaching religious truths, if they are kept in their proper place.

“Once more—as we have just seen—the life and death of the Messiah may appropriately be used as a symbol of the soul’s progress. In both cases it becomes a ‘Drama of Redemption,’ for it is based upon the law of sacrifice; indeed, just the same as in every one of the cults with which we are acquainted. The plan of salvation connected with the mission of Jesus is therefore no exception to this; nay, it may be said to be intensified—

inasmuch, that it is now seen that it is Love, eternal and infinite, which is the origin of sacrifices, *i.e.* of love giving itself to save others. It is, therefore, by love and sacrifice that the oneness of the individual self with God is revealed and sealed. It is by this sacrificing love that our highest good is realised—not a selfish love, but one founded in the happiness of others and in the life of love and communion with our own Higher Self.

“Let me say, in conclusion, that this Divine love burns up all that is mean and vile, sordid and selfish, in our nature; for love is essential to salvation. It is by love that we give ourselves willingly and joyfully, in the Logos Spirit, to the Logos service. From the cross of self-renunciation we rise to the sublime heights of self-fulfilment; because, as Christ is, so also shall we become. The keynote of all is the essential divinity and solidarity of humanity with God; shown by our possessing God’s spirit of love, beauty and truth, in however faint degrees while on earth.

“Now, to draw us to Himself more effectually and speedily, God in His sublime, and attractive character, is finally and fully revealed to humanity in the Logos; of which we in a sense are also partakers,—for the Logos Spirit must dwell within each soul, enlightening it and inspiring it, if it is to become more and more like that higher, beautiful and ever present reality which we call our Heavenly Father. Therefore, Love is the only pathway towards the unutterable joy of an indissoluble oneness with the whole creation, and above all, with God Himself, the Creator and Sustainer of it all.”

When Apollos ceased, Reuben pressed his hands warmly, and said:—“What a contrast you are to the dry-as-dust seekers after wisdom whom I meet in Alexandria. They are all calm, calculating reasoners, deeply versed in mathematics, logic and kindred subjects, but with little or no display of emotion, or a sublime forgetfulness of self for the sake of others or of God. You, on the other hand, are all imagination, poetry, enthusiasm, and with a

heart overflowing with love and tenderness. Owing to this you live as it were in a fairyland, which has unfortunately in many respects no substantiality for the carnal mind; but nevertheless, it is very beautiful and attractive in its spiritual aspect. Thus nearly the whole biography you have now completed, although the work of one with high intellectual gifts and spiritual elevation, is nevertheless based more upon 'fancy and imagination than upon actual facts. Yet, in spite of this, it may do an immense amount of good in the world, because beneath the fancies of intuition and imagination you have built upon the eternal foundations of the spiritual laws of love, beauty and holiness, upon which existence after all for ever rests. The same applies to your conception of the Logos. In itself, it is a pure assumption, an unverified hypothesis, and is dangerously near the overthrowing of our sacred belief in the monotheism of Jehovah. Nevertheless, it may have its proper place, if we conceive it under the category of God's immanence in the world; for in this aspect, not Jesus only

but the whole humanity, may well be represented as being the offspring of God. His Divinity is reflected in highest perfection in Jesus, our divine Christ, who will therefore ever be our glorious and divine leader to the heights of a sanctified and glorified humanity."

Reuben continued his remarks, by saying:—"Well, we seem to have exhausted for the present the subject bearing on the spiritual biography, which is practically an imaginary production, but yet with a lofty and inspiring message to humanity. Please say, do you intend to circulate it among the various congregations in Asia, and send it even further afield?"

"No," Apollos replied, "at first I will simply utilise it in our own meeting-houses, and perhaps get Timothy, who often resides here, or others, to assist me in writing out copies to others; but of course it will go slowly, as I will have little time to spare for this extra work. The increase of its circulation will depend upon the favour with which it will be

received, as the other biographies in circulation are better known and may be more appreciated. Time will tell whether it will win its way among the various Churches scattered in Asia and abroad. Probably its best chance will be among the better educated of the Gentile converts, whether Greeks or Romans, rather than among the converted Jews, to whom Matthew's memoir may be more acceptable, as it appeals so much to the Jews' unshaken belief in the prophecies."

Reuben answered:—"After all, there is one more question I want to put to you. You have explained the 'dramatic' and 'symbolic' arrangements of these memoirs, but tell me, have you had any fixed plan in composing the 'narrative' form?"

"Well," replied Apollos, "to a certain extent; but this can only be shown as we carefully go over each paragraph, for which we have no time at present. The work can be divided into seven sections, each of which falls naturally into three main parts. The spiritual significance is the real

interpretation of the facts. Shortly stated, however, I have proceeded as follows:—

“The memoirs have a threefold content:

1st. Narratives.

2nd. Discourses.

3rd. Miracles.

Now my plan has been in some parts to have the narratives or miracles associated with interpretative discourses, while in other places I have presented them in the opposite order. Thus, the one miracle and the one narrative, say ‘the feast at Canaan’ and ‘the cleansing of the temple,’ are followed by discourses interpreting them.

“Again, the two miracles of healing are followed by a discourse on the symbolic healing of the Jewish nation.

“Or the two miracles, ‘feeding the five thousand people,’ and ‘walking on the sea,’ are followed by a discourse as to Jesus being the symbolic bread of life, &c.

“On the other hand, Jesus claiming to be ‘the light of the world’ is followed by giving

sight to the blind man. Jesus proclaiming himself as being the 'life of the world' is followed by giving life to Lazarus who was dead, &c.

“In studying these memoirs, you will be able for yourself to follow their construction more closely, and you will convince yourself that these are not put down in a haphazard fashion, but that the whole scheme was carefully thought out and planned beforehand. In fact, the whole Gospel, in its symbolic language, thoughts and expressions, is based upon the Essenes' mystic doctrines, of which Jesus during his lifetime was one of our ablest exponents; therefore, as I said, this Gospel begins in mysticism and ends in symbolism. Let now the Christian Church give its verdict to which of these Gospels it gives its preference. I have done my best to honour our Christ in the way which I conceive would meet the approval of our late Superior, whose memory be blessed.”

SYLVANUS

THE next morning when the two friends met, Reuben said to Apollos:—"What you told me yesterday as to the ingenuous remarks made by Sylvanus has interested me greatly, and I am sorry he is not here, so that I could have made his personal acquaintance. I wish you had drawn his attention more specially to the roll composed by our late and revered Superior, and have secured his opinion as to the source—seeing his mind is so acute and his learning so profound. I refer, of course, to the beautifully conceived discourses attributed to Jesus in his last meeting with his disciples."

Apollos replied:—"I am pleased to say that I have anticipated your wish, for the same reason which you give. I must say that Sylvanus' criticism was lengthened and ingenuous, as well as interesting. His first

query to me was, whether these discourses had reached me as actual sayings or legacies of Jesus recorded at the time, or whether they were ideal studies; and if so, whether I had composed them in honour of the Master? To this I replied that they had been handed to me from a private source, which I had no reason, however, to believe conveyed actual occurrences; but, like the rest of the rolls, were based not so much upon facts as upon poetic creations of ideal situations and events, so as to set forth more clearly the spiritual life of Jesus as the Logos of God, thereby honouring him.

“Sylvanus answered, that this was also the exact conclusion he had come to. The episodes showed clearly that the Author, whoever he was, had been a Jewish Mystic of great spiritual insight—one who, like the Gnostics, rested his belief on the grand antithesis of the two worlds: those who are from above and those who are from below, and hence its controversial character throughout. He was also one who had been in deepest sympathy with

the Mission of Jesus, and in whom he had recognised the incarnation of the expected Logos. He had therefore depicted the closing hours with his disciples in the lofty manner described.

“Thereupon I asked Sylvanus if he thought that he could analyse these discourses for me, to which he also consented. A week later he returned the scrolls to me, with the following written explanations:—

“‘After studying carefully these discourses, it is clear to me, as already stated, that they have been composed by a Jewish Rabbi, one who was deeply conversant with the Alexandrian, Gnostic and Jewish philosophical and mystical schools, the literature of which is so freely circulated in our Holy Land, in the so-called Wisdom Literature, with its Odes, &c., where also sayings of the Logos abound. All these works have evidently been familiar to the devout Author of these discourses, and have assisted him in composing this spiritual biography.

“‘Not only this, but the Author clearly

shows that he had also been a diligent student of Philo's writings, both allegorical and philosophical; especially the latter, bearing upon the Logos theory. Lastly, that the Author had arrived at the conclusion, from Gnostic sources, that Jesus had actually been the Jewish Messiah—not in its earthly, but in its “spiritual” aspect, in order to “reveal” God to the world. The Author evidently believed that Jesus had realised this by daily living the life of God upon earth—say the beautiful life of service, of love, of truth and of sacrifice. In this way, both by words and actions, Jesus had revealed God in His wonderful beauty and lovable nature.

“It is therefore from this point of view that Jesus is here portrayed by the devout artist in several beautiful pictures, translating the conceptions of the Rabbis into the language of Greek speculation. Remember, Jesus had proclaimed God as being Divine Love in all its plenitude, and that he had been appointed to be the Revealer of his heavenly Father's glorious character. Hence at this last meeting

with his beloved friends, the Author represents him as revealing, without restraint, the unfathomable and divine love of God, which dwelt also in the heart of His son and true Revealer. Let me try to explain a little more fully the ideas underlying these imaginary incidents and speeches.

FIRST PICTURE—THE MESSIAH'S HUMILITY

“ ‘ Now, one of the most outstanding features of the character of Jesus, as can be read in his memoirs, was his humility, even although, as the heavenly Messiah, he is stated to have believed himself occupying the highest rank in the Universe and the sharer of the throne of the Almighty. Yet during his missionary tours it is reported that he said to his disciples on various occasions, as well as to the multitudes who were listening to him, “ Learn of me, for I am meek and lowly of heart.” This humility is astonishing indeed ; not only if it applied to the Logos, but much

more if it meant to be also a revelation of God Himself as included in His beautiful, perfect, and adorable character, of which Jesus claimed to be the "Revealer." Evidently Jesus considered the latter task as "Revealer" as being one of his chief missions upon earth to which God had specially called him.

"Now, the devout artist of these various delineations of the Messiah's characters fastens, in the first place, upon this beautiful grace of Humility, in order to glorify Jesus and hold him up to the admiration of the whole world. Apparently the Author had known Jesus personally, and had loved him fervently and admiringly.

"In this picture he makes Jesus show, by a practical illustration, the true ministry of Love, which led him now to do a most lowly and humble task. It was, as said, a case of wonderful, divine self-abasement, considering Jesus' belief in his own divine rank; soon he expected to be arrayed in his glorious robes of light and majesty, on his ascension

to his Heavenly Father's throne on high. I need not tell you that this lowly task is the office of the meanest slave, who washes his master's bare or sandalled feet—soiled by the dust of the way—before food is partaken of. If Jesus would stoop so low for the sake of showing the deep love which he bore for his brethren, they would have no excuse in after life to do other than the same to their brethren for his sake. Such a spirit of loving and considerate kindness and condescension—they being at the same time clothed with humility and sympathy, and willing to perform self-sacrificing services for others—would reveal to the world, that they were the true followers of Jesus, and children of the Highest—a check to pride, ambition and arrogance, as well as to a harsh, overbearing conduct towards others, which failings are unfortunately so rife in the world.

THE SECOND PICTURE—THE DIVINE
GUARDIAN AND GUIDE

““In the company of his disciples, I find that the Artist has next presented Jesus as gently breaking the news to them that he is on the point of leaving them. He gratifies the curiosity of his disciples as to whither he is going. He refers not to an earthly journey. It is the eternal life upon which he is about to enter, and whither his disciples shall by-and-by also follow him. Now, you may know that when the Jews who live in the outlying Provinces are making their pilgrimages to Jerusalem, if they are at all wealthy, they send messengers beforehand to secure proper quarters for them at the respective stations they will arrive at on the different stages of their journey. Jesus, in order to allay any fears on the part of his beloved disciples, is made to promise them, therefore, in his condescension and love to them, that he himself would arrange their resting-places on the way to the Father’s

Home. Not only so, but so anxious is Jesus, as portrayed here, in his affection for his friends, not to leave them comfortless, that in case they would be afraid to lose their way by travelling through these vast and unknown regions towards the Eternal Mansions, he promises that he will return and bring them himself to their Heavenly Home, which is one for perpetuity—so that they may never be separated again. They would therefore not only be spectators of his glory, but sharers in it. Jesus would not only prepare the place for them, but also prepare them for it.

“The reason of the Artist for making Jesus give this promise seems to have been because he knew that Jesus himself had lived and died in the belief that shortly after his untimely end, he would return in glory, according to the Scriptures, with the angels of heaven, to overthrow the Evil One and establish the Kingdom of Heaven upon earth. After this glorious victory, Jesus would return

to Heaven with all his followers to whom he was speaking, and ascend to his everlasting glory in triumph, to rule for evermore as the world's Redeemer. If this belief was not shared by Jesus during his lifetime, it apparently was the firm belief of his enthusiastic biographer, and others like-minded, after his death.

THE THIRD PICTURE—THE LOGOS AND HIS DISCIPLES, UNDER THE EMBLEM OF A VINE AND ITS BRANCHES

“‘As you may know, over the entrance to the Temple edifice at Jerusalem there was a celebrated carved emblem of colossal size, the length of a man's stature, namely a “wreath of golden vines.” This striking figure was a well-known Messianic emblem, drawn from Psalm lxxx., according to the Aramaic paraphrase, where the Messiah is referred to as the vine shoot which Jehovah had planted. The Author has therefore apparently employed this appropriate symbol

when he wished to represent the mutual love and union between Jesus, the revealer of God's love, and his members upon earth. Let me point out, however, that much of the language recorded here has evidently been drawn from the well-known book, the Wisdom of Sirach, where similar figurative language has been employed.

“This parable is beautifully worked out. You will find that there is a description of a fivefold love in this Union of loving souls:—

The Father's love of Jesus.

The Son's love of the Father.

The Son's love of his disciples.

The latter's love of Jesus, and lastly,

The disciples love of each other.

In this emblem of a loving “union of souls” may also be seen the ideal of humanity in the moral and spiritual grandeur of a true Union pervading it and based upon love. When this ideal is realised, then the whole of humanity will be dwelling together in concord, in love, in harmony, and in active helpful co-operation and willing sacrifice, with

a spirit of mutual forbearance and kindness—all for each and each for all, to the happiness of man and to the glory of God. For although the branches of the vine may be many, yet meeting in the root they are all but one vine; and thus where love is the root, a consecrated happy life will be the fruit. In the light of Jesus' teaching, we see, therefore, love explained with new clearness, we see it enforced by new motives, we see it illustrated by a new example and obeyed in a new manner.

FOURTH PICTURE—THE HOLY SPIRIT UNDER VARIOUS DESIGNATIONS

“‘The Jewish Mystics, as you may know, have given various titles to the Divine Medium through whom Jehovah, it was believed, had created and ruled the world, before your new sect announced the advent of the Logos upon earth in the incarnation of Jesus your Christ.

“‘Some in Babylon called this celestial Medium “Memra,” *i.e.* the Divine Word—

others "Kochmah," or the Divine Wisdom; to some it was an attribute of Jehovah, or one of the highest of His creation, but to the greater part this Medium was afterwards believed to be a divine person, the first-born son or the first-born daughter of the Almighty.

"Since Philo raised the discussion in his writings by calling the divine medium in Greek the Logos, the divine Word, the name has been altered in many quarters. Instead of being called, as in the Proverbs, the "Spirit of Wisdom," it is now also called Bath Kol, the "Spirit of Truth, of Prophecy, or of Holiness." As said, this divine medium is generally represented in our Holy Scriptures and in their Apocryphal writings as a "Counsellor" to the Most High, also as a Comforter, and other appellatives, but is chiefly looked upon by high and low as an "*Advocate*," namely like Michael, our national guardian angel, the celestial Prince of Israel, who stands in the court of Heaven at the right hand of God to plead for the people of Israel, and thus effect their redemption and eternal blessedness.

“‘Now, evidently the Author’s conception has been that when Jesus as the Logos-Messiah, returns to heaven after his work is accomplished upon earth, that the other celestial medium Kochmah or Bath Kol, through whom Heaven had acted in the past ages, would now be specially set apart under this or other exalted names to protect and guide the beloved disciples of the Logos; yea, he would, just as Michael to the Jews, but in a higher sense, be their Comforter, their Counsellor, their Paraclete, their Reprover, their Guide and Protector during their sojourn upon the earth as through an enemy’s country, But above all, he would be their celestial *Advocate* to justify and plead their cause before high Heaven. As you read carefully the various promises of the Holy Spirit’s work on their behalf here and hereafter, you will doubtless come to the same conclusion at which I have arrived regarding the source of these mystic conceptions, which, truth to tell, are based upon pure guesswork, just as much as the conception of the Jews of the work and

mission of the heavenly Michael, in whom, you know, all orthodox Jews firmly believe.

“‘Now, although I have tried to explain these mystic passages to you, yet I do not agree with their teaching. The theory which this gifted and devout Author advocates means, in reality, a long and dangerous step towards the corrupt Polytheism which the Jews must avoid at all hazards, if the true religion of Moses is to be preserved and become universal—which all true-hearted Jews long and pray for.

“‘This mystic teaching, drawn from Pagan sources, of the necessity of Divine Mediums or divine sacrifices being sent from Heaven to save the world from the consequences of its sins and save it from the grasp of the Evil One, has to many minds, mostly Philosophers or Greek Jews, certain attractive features; but to me, as an orthodox Jew, who believes above all in the Unity of Jehovah, and therefore abhors the idea of a Duality or a Trinity in the Godhead, these beliefs in the Logos, or in the Holy Spirit as Divine “Persons” in

the Godhead, must be rejected as utterly wrong, mischievous, and even blasphemous.

“ ‘Instead of such erroneous and blasphemous teaching, I look upon Jehovah, not only in a transcendent aspect, but also in an immanent aspect—by which God is justified, glorified and beloved by all who can grasp the wonderful truth in all its beauty and attraction, for God, being Love and our Father, explains everything satisfactorily.

“ ‘Instead, therefore, of two eternal powers being at war in the Universe, I see only the immanent life in higher or lower developments, all presided and ruled over by the immanent God, who knows how, in His wisdom and power, to bring higher good out what is the lesser good.

“ ‘Thus the greater part of the mystic Author’s philosophy and his scheme of salvation must be given up as unnecessary and erroneous—yea, I repeat it again—even as blasphemous, by all who stand up for the Unity or the Oneness of Jehovah:—“Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is one Lord,

and there is none else beside Him." The reason of this declension in the noble faith of Moses is easily seen, when it is remembered that in course of ages there was an increasing tendency to shroud the Divinity in impenetrable mystery and to regard Him as unapproachable and undiscernible by man. This led to the invention of a Divine representative and substitution of God, through whom alone He would reveal Himself. In other words, the immanent and supra-personal God was lost sight of in His transcendancy. In this way the door was opened to Polytheism—the curse of all nations upon earth, except the Jews, who have hitherto escaped it.

THE FINAL RELIGION OF HUMANITY

“Let me add the following remarks to make my meaning more clear to you.

“The true and final Religion of Humanity will only be established when the Jewish monotheistic faith has been enlarged so as to incorporate the faith of Jesus the Reformer

who taught, as said, that Jehovah was not only transcendental, but had also an immanent aspect, which latter would do away with all the wrong beliefs now current of the necessity of having celestial mediators or sacrificed Divinities to appease Heaven or rule the earth, and take up their abode in the souls of men.

“ ‘The conception regarding Jehovah will also be enlarged by incorporating the message of Jesus, for which he lived and died, namely—that Jehovah is not only our Creator, our King and our Judge, but that He is also, above all, our Heavenly Father, whose beautiful character is Divine Love in all its plenitude, unchanging and everlasting, which Love is the summit of His self-manifestation to Humanity.

“ ‘Therefore Jehovah, who is the only God—
 “He who is before all, above all, and beyond all”—is yet by His immanence the deepest self of our personality and the glorious goal of all our aspirations. Here we have the grand simplicity of the message of Jesus, who proclaimed Love to the Highest with service to the lowliest, as the test of our devotion

and our adoration of Him. Indeed, obedience to the will of God constitutes the essence of filial love towards our Heavenly Father. This, I apprehend, will be the outline of the Religion of Humanity in ages yet to come. Upon this foundation may be erected the Kingdom of God, which is that of the reign of universal love and service to God and Man.

“‘ We see, therefore, that the glorious immanent God is Himself exactly what the old prophets proclaimed long ago—namely, our only Redeemer, Sanctifier, Saviour, Comforter and Guide. He stands in no need of extraneous aids to make us perfect and take us home in heaven to Himself, when our education or probation is ended. Our Jehovah stands in no need of any of the imagined Divinities of the Heathens, the Holy Ghost of the Mystics, or the Logos of the Philosophers, or indeed, of any substitutes whatever, whether celestial or terrestrial. To Jehovah, as our beloved Father in Heaven, let therefore all the glory be given! Jehovah is one, and, as the prophets told us long ago, His glory

He will not give to another. Let us also believe that God's eternal purpose towards humanity is one of love, hence, let us be content to rest in this satisfying and comforting belief, and give Him all the glory. All the same, let us love and admire Jesus, and all the other beautiful mediums whom God has created and raised up to elevate humanity, —making it more like Himself in all His spiritual beauty, attraction and perfection; through their ministration, their instrumentality, their life's teaching and their shining examples. In them have been incarnated "Divinity in Humanity," in its most alluring, elevating and beautiful manifestations.

THE FIFTH PICTURE—THE GLORY TO COME

“Let me, lastly, present an outline of the reported prayer of the Logos to his Heavenly Father. I have found it most impressive, for it is beautifully conceived by the Author. It throbs with emotion, and breathes an un-

utterable tenderness. There is also infused a triumphant note at the prospect of Jesus having now completed his mission—*i.e.* in having revealed God to the world at large as a loving Father; having thereby also brought love down upon the earth, as the fulfilling of all laws.

“The devout Author has presented the prayer in a threefold aspect:—

1st. For the Logos himself.

2nd. For his disciples.

3rd. For believers through all ages.

I leave you to study these for yourself, and to mark the tenderness which they breathe. Only let me explain, in passing, that in conformity with the views of the mystic schools, the Logos was believed to have lived in glory with God in heaven before the world was; hence the Author puts in the mouth of his Logos the following sentence:—

“And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory which I had with thee before the world was, for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world.”

“*The exaltation of the Logos is seen in the following statement:—*“Thou hast given thy Son authority over all flesh.”

““This is, however, merely a short summary, because Philo in his works had expanded this idea to a much greater extent, when dwelling upon the exaltation of the Logos and the many other exalted titles which he bore. Thus, in one of his descriptions of the Logos, Philo says that the Logos is also the Ambassador, and is therefore sent with authority by the Governor of the Universe to his subjects (all flesh).

““The *mission* of the Logos upon earth is stated to be fourfold :

1st. “And the glory (or the glorious message) which thou hast given me I have given unto them.”

2nd. “Thou hast given me power to confer eternal happiness or life upon as many as Thou hast given me.”

3rd. “I have glorified Thee upon the earth.”

4th. “I have finished the work which Thou gavest me to do.”

“*The object of his mission is also given:—*

“That they may be one, even as we are one.” This is also an expansion drawn from Philo, where he says that the Logos is placed nearest to the only existing God, without any separation or distance between them (see *De Profugis*, No. 19, Mangey, i. 561). Let me point out that this union or oneness, taken along with other texts, is evidently meant by the Author to be so perfect that all things belonging to the one belong equally to the other—there are no separate or divided interests, because they are united in the bonds of love, as if they were one body, under one head and animated by one soul.

“*Lastly—This oneness is shown to consist, as stated, in a perfect and everlasting bond of affection—Listen:—*“That the love wherewith thou lovedst me, may be in them and I in them, for Thou hast loved them as Thou hast loved me.”

“*In other words, we learn that it is the oneness of our will with the divine will which causes harmony to reign in the soul of man.*

It is only in a life rooted in love that we gain the deepest, purest and truest conceptions of God the beloved, realising by love and admiration our true relation to Him, and through Him to one another.

“‘The rest of the intercessory prayer is equally instructive, but I need not go into more details.

“‘Let me only add a few words bearing upon *The glory to come*.

“‘In the farewell addresses and the intercessory prayer of Jesus, you will have noticed that there is one subject dwelt upon again and again. This is the word “Glory.”

“‘Perhaps we may better understand the devout Author’s train of thoughts, if we draw an illustration from Nature. Thus, as the sun is constantly giving out his bright beams from the ocean of his glorious orb, whereby Nature is changed from one degree of glory, or perfection or beauty, to another; so also, in the plant world, which also receives of the sun’s glory, we see the young plants transfigured from the glory of leaves to the glory

of bloom, and from the glory of bloom to the glory of the ripe fruit.

“Thus also, in a spiritual sense, wherever Heaven’s glorious beams of truth and love are shining into the hearts of souls upon earth: even the most unlovely and unripe characters begin also gradually to be transformed from glory to glory, becoming at last perfectly beautiful and radiant, even with the glory of God’s own exceeding loveliness.

“From this illustration let us learn that our life on earth is only one term of an infinite and ever-advancing series of higher and higher harmonies and beauties, which may all be summed up in one sentence:—“A glory to come.”

“This glory is a royal and a heavenly gift to each and every soul, for we are all of a lofty lineage,—who may trace our pedigree up to God Himself in His fulness of glory; and yet how few try to realise it, so as to fill their hearts with joy and happiness at the prospect of the “Glory which is to come.” Therefore, being the offspring of God, we are essentially divine, and are destined to be sharers

of God's everlasting Glory, Joy and Beauty, however humble a station we may occupy in this short life of preparation upon earth.'"

After having come to the end of this long letter of explanations, Apollos turned to Reuben, and said to him:—"Well, what do you think of Sylvanus' strictures upon your late Superior's spiritual addresses, composed in the name of Jesus and for his honour?" Reuben expressed himself as quite satisfied, and asked Apollos to convey his warmest thanks to Sylvanus when he met him again.

Before parting, Apollos said:—"I must not forget to tell you, that I also asked Sylvanus whether he had any further remarks to make regarding these rolls.

"‘Well,’ he answered, ‘there are one or two short observations I should like to make.

"‘In the first place, I wish to repeat that the various speeches recorded as having been made by Jesus at his farewell meeting have left the impression vividly on my mind that they are purely fictitious; and I therefore reject them

authenticity. I am also more sure than ever that I can detect the writer having been an elderly person, one much older than Jesus, probably a Rabbi or a Superior in a religious society or convent, one in the habit of teaching and addressing young novices at his classes, and to whom he was, as it were, their spiritual father.

“ ‘ Let me explain :—The whole tone which runs through these speeches is paternal, and unlike that which we should expect from Jesus, a young man of about thirty years of age—who was famous for his ability in making impromptu speeches, carrying on keen arguments, and teaching by parables of incomparable beauty, directness of aim and utterances. Now look at the contrast of these recorded farewell addresses. Here we have a few ideas, repeated over and over again, even to weariness, all in symbolic language, with conceptions mostly drawn from the Alexandrian mystic schools or found in works which are well known in Judæa and the Diaspora, such as the Wisdom of Solomon, the Book of Sirach, and a host of others.

“ ‘ Again, in support of my contention that the writer was an elderly person, read how in one place at this last meeting, he calls them “ Little children, yet a little while I am with you,” &c. This coming from a young man at the age of Jesus, speaking to a dozen grown-up men, some apparently older than himself, confirms the view I had taken independently.

“ ‘ If the Author was an elderly person, it accounts also for the constant and monotonous reiteration of the same thoughts and phrases, just as you find old people apt to repeat themselves and drag out unnecessarily what they wish to convey to others.

“ ‘ But whether I am right or wrong, I need not say more on this point. There is another subject, however, to which I wish to draw your attention. Have you noticed that on the rolls you have lent me, there are inserted in the margins of several of the sheets, a good many additions and emendations, by apparently strange hands, probably done with a view to improving upon the original.

“Thus take as a specimen, where Jesus prays to the Father: “And this is life eternal, that they might know Thee, the only true God.” Some one has inserted in the margin, speaking in the third person: “And Jesus Christ whom Thou hast sent.”

“Time does not permit me to give other examples, but I would recommend you, when copies are taken of these rolls, that you instruct the amanuensis not to embody any of these marginal additions into the body of the work.’

“To this remark of Sylvanus, I replied that I believed that you had shown the roll to several of your Essene friends at Alexandria, and also to other scholars of the mystical schools from whom these additions had emanated.

“At the same time, I told Sylvanus that the differences were really so small, that it might be as well to leave them alone, with which I suppose you also agree, seeing that it is not a question of inspired writings, like our Holy Scriptures, with which we have to deal? Let me also say in closing that, accord-

ing to the express wish of our late Superior, I have closed the spiritual biography with the burial of Jesus, thus leaving out all references to his reported resurrection and ascension to glory after forty days.

“According to the view of our late revered Master, with which I fully agree, the immortal spirit of Jesus ascended to Heaven at the moment of his bodily death upon the cross, just as is appointed to all the saints of God, according to the words of the Psalmist of old.

“Not unlikely, however, if our Spiritual Biography falls into the hands of learned converted Rabbis who are supporters of the current beliefs regarding the bodily resurrection and the bodily ascension of Jesus, that, by-and-by, they may draw upon their imagination and make the additions which I have refrained from doing in closing our memoirs.”

With all this Reuben declared himself quite agreeable, and the much-discussed subject of “The Spiritual Biography of Jesus” came to an end.

THE LORD'S SUPPER

REUBEN had been greatly interested in the communications of Apollos, and on the next day, when they met, he said that his attention had been specially arrested by Apollos' statement as to the risk of admitting Pagan beliefs into the Christian Church; and he asked him to explain himself more fully, as this might be a serious matter.

Apollos replied:—"Well, it is in some respects an intricate subject; but as we have the whole afternoon to ourselves, I shall explain my view as briefly as possible.

"One of the subjects as to which I am doubtful if it will long retain its original simple meaning of celebration, is the Lord's Supper. To my mind, this simple feast of fellowship of the living, and as a memorial of our Christ until his return, appears already to be gradu-

ally drifting into an act of idolatry, by quietly adopting the Pagan's conception which underlies their sacred suppers in their mystic feasts.

“The sacred supper of the Pagans is a belief in the transubstantiation of the elements of bread and wine of which they partake, after these have been consecrated by the officiating heathen priests. The elements at that moment are believed to have become, by a miracle, the veritable body and blood of their divinities. The stupendous results are, among others, that between the gods and the worshippers there is by this sacrament, as it were, a Covenant made, viz. :—

1st. Communion with the gods, thus gaining their friendship and protection.

2nd. Pardon of sins committed.

3rd. The gifts of a blessed immortality.

“Now, you can easily see that this superstitious rite has, more than anything else, put enormous power into the hands of the heathen priesthood; and, to me, the great risk is that if the new faith wins its way into the Roman

Empire, this superstition will gradually be engrafted upon our faith, which will practically undo nearly everything for which our Christ lived and died.

“It is worth while, therefore, to look back into ancient history, and see how this superstition secured an entrance and took such a strong hold upon nearly all the Pagan cults. Indeed, I may say that this rite is one of the oldest of antiquity, and has become almost the most august of all the ceremonies and sacraments in the holy mysteries of heathendom.

“One of the earliest glimpses we get of it in history is that of the ancient Egyptians, who celebrated annually by this feast the resurrection of their God and Saviour Osiris; by offering him the sacred bread and eating it with him, after it had been consecrated and blessed by the presiding priest. At that moment the miracle of Transubstantiation was believed to have taken place, for the priest would announce that the bread they had eaten had become the veritable flesh of Osiris, the Son of God, their mediator and sacrifice; in

consequence of which they had henceforth been made one with him in his life, nature and kinship. They had also thereby been cleansed from all their sins, made fit for heaven and assured of immortality.

“Let us next turn our attention to the Eleusinian mysteries, where the sacrament of the Lord’s Supper has also been celebrated for ages. It was first held in honour of Ceres, the goddess of corn and bread, who in symbolical language was said to have given her worshippers her own flesh to eat at the secret feast; and secondly, in honour of Bacchus, the famous god of wine, who also in symbolical language gave his worshippers his own blood to drink to make them one. The consecrated cup of wine was called *Agathodæmon*, *i.e.* ‘The beloved Divinity.’ By these two rites, consecrated by the blessings and prayers of the priests with incantations, there were believed to be obtained an expiation of the past sins of the worshippers. They were also placed under the special protection of their gods, while, above all, a blessed immortality

was bestowed upon them. Accordingly, this sacrament was invariably given to the dying, as a charm and passport to heaven. All over the East, eating a sacred meal with the god who was worshipped, constituted a sacred and indissoluble bond or relationship between the worshipper and the one worshipped.

“You will find that the Greek Sophist Prodicus, who lived *c.* 550 years ago, said that the ancients worshipped bread as Demeter or Ceres, and wine as Dionysius or Bacchus; hence, it was a current saying that they ate the flesh and drank the blood of their gods. In fact, I believe that the mystical wine and bread continue to be used regularly in the worship of nearly every celebrated deity, whether Adonis, Ceres, Vesta, Bacchus, Osiris, and especially in the Mithra worship.

“Thus you see that the doctrine of Transubstantiation, or the invisible miraculous change of the bread and wine into the body and blood of their respective deities, has been a common belief for ages among the heathen in their worship; and this superstitious rite, I

am afraid, may be ultimately transferred to the Christian faith, unless the greatest watchfulness is observed.

“It was against this belief of Transubstantiation that the celebrated Cicero, who lived *c.* 170 years ago, wrote:—‘How can a man be so stupid as to imagine that which he eats to be a god?’

“Now, you may say that after all no great harm is done by this mystical belief; but here you are quite wrong, for the heathen believe, as mentioned, that the Eucharist, this huge and ceremonial structure, is a true and proper sacrifice for the sins of the living, also of the dead, and even of the souls in purgatory, with other benefits as already stated. But, mark you, the miracle for the benefit of the living and the dead does not take place until the consecration has been made by the priest, accompanied by sundry incantations; hence you see it means, that the approach to God, the forgiveness of sins, the salvation of the soul and the blessed gift of immortality—all these, according to this dogma, depend upon

the mediation and intervention of a holy priesthood, which is therefore indispensable to procure the desired heavenly blessings.

“It was in order to bring the soul into *direct* communion with God, without the intervention of a priesthood, or by the offering of bloody or unbloody sacrifices, that our Christ proclaimed his good news to humanity ; but if his followers disregard this, or do not appreciate the liberty, the glory, the benefit, and the eternal honour which it gives to the human soul : well, the result can only be that the Christians will be caught in the nets of the Pagan superstition in which way Transubstantiation will be the all-powerful weapon by which an ecclesiastical despotism will keep the sole control of the souls of the Christian worshippers, both for this life and for the next. In other words, Heathenism will conquer Christianity in its most essential aspect, and this may continue for many ages. The nations of the earth will be kept in leading-strings, superstition and ignorance, by a despotic ecclesiastical power.

“Let me add that another sacred custom, similar in some respects, is the reverence and adoration which the Romans pay to Vesta, which female deity is appeased with the sacred bread (*Farre pio*) and with incense—but without sacrifice of blood. The strong belief in efficacy of the unbloody sacrifice appears to have been introduced from Egypt a few centuries ago into the Roman Empire, but even earlier from Persia, and it has gradually become very popular among all classes.

“Thus the God Serapis from Egypt is appeased with presentation of unleavened bread, called Paneficus (little round loaves). It is similarly seen in the Mithras or Mazdaism worship, now spread all over the Empire, where the glorious Mithras is claimed to be the sole mediator between God and his worshippers, the Saviour of mankind by his death and resurrection—he being also the vicegerent of God upon earth, born of a virgin, and the judge of mankind on the day of resurrection.

“The celebration of the Eucharist, *i.e.* the

worship of the host, or consecrated sacramental bread and wine, may in our times be seen almost every day in Alexandria, in Rome, in Antioch, in Ephesus, &c., where processions are passing along the streets in solemn state on their visits to the sick and the dying, after the Eucharist has first been celebrated in the respective Pagan temples. Every individual, as the host passes him or her, must bow the knee in token of adoration.

“Let me explain that the word ‘mass’ is in Latin ‘mizza,’ or ‘missa Fidelum’; in Persia, ‘myazda’; in Hebrew ‘mazza.’ This stands for the consecrated unleavened sacred bread, while the holy drink where wine is not used, is called Haoma in Persia, and Soma in India. This is the consecrated beverage of the gods, of talismanic virtue—by the partaking of which, and the bread, the worshippers are believed to become sharers of the divine nature, and also become friends of their respective gods; besides having, by this feast, all their sins blotted out, and thus secured of a happy immortality. Hence you can easily see the

importance attached by high and low among the heathen worshippers to the celebration of the Eucharist.

“May I add that the full service observed by the Pagan priests in the celebration of the Eucharist, takes place after the end of the ordinary services in the temple, and is only participated in by the initiated? It means, in its fullest sense, not only a sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving, a commemoration of the death and resurrection of their respective gods; not only the ideal union of believers, and their fellowship upon earth as brethren, but also a propitiation by which Serapis, Jupiter, Zeus, or Ahura Mazda, or whoever is the god worshipped at the time, is appeased and made to be propitious and merciful to the worshippers. But above all, as pointed out more than once, the importance lies in the consecration of the elements by the priests; for it is claimed by the heathen priesthood that only after this has been done by them does the miracle of Transubstantiation take place.

It is then only that the worshipped and the worshippers may become one in a divine union, by the latter having feasted upon the mystical divine blood and body of their respective gods.

“You will therefore notice that in most of the various Pagan cults there is a twofold sacrifice:—

“*1st.* The Pagans’ national bloody sacrifices in their temple courts—made in honour of those respective deities who, by the shedding of blood on the altars, procure the forgiveness of the sins of the worshippers and the nation at large.

“*2nd.* The unbloody sacrifice of individuals presented to Vesta or other deities, who are considered more easily propitiated, and with less expensive offerings; but in any case, by this miraculous transaction of Transubstantiation, the bread and the wine are claimed by the heathen priesthood to be converted into the spiritual substance of the body and blood of their deities—upon which the worshippers are spiritually nourished, and live henceforth under their divine protection, as already fully explained.”

Reuben now answered:—"All you say is very interesting, but pray tell me what makes you think that our new sect should be tempted to adopt the Pagan's extreme and mystic dogma to which you refer, bearing upon the Lord's Supper?"

Apollos replied:—"Allow me to explain. There are several grades of belief connected with this ceremony. Thus, take the simplest case. The great bulk of the Jewish converts has been drawn, as you know, from the sects of the poor Ebionites and Nazarenes. Now these deny the divinity of our Jesus, while admitting his Messiahship. They maintain the continued obligation of the Jewish law, with its circumcision, the celebration of the Passover, its animal sacrifices, and all other rites. Now when these converted Ebionites partake of the Lord's Supper, generally bread and water, or water mixed with wine, they celebrate it for a twofold reason:—

1st, as an Agapæ, or feast of brotherly fellowship;

2nd, in remembrance of the Messiah and his speedy return.

“On the other hand, Paul has gone a step further; for his task, as you remember, is more difficult, diplomatic and far-reaching,—namely, to try and weld the Jewish and Gentile elements into a corporate Unity of the new faith. We find, therefore, that Paul not only looks upon the celebration of the Lord's Supper as the Ebionites hold it, but also as it is found in the Pagan cults; namely, making it above all a ‘sacramental feast,’ while at the same time to win over the Jews he substitutes for the slain Jewish Paschal Lamb, the death of Christ on the Cross, who becomes to him the world's slain sacrifice, *i.e.* the Lamb of God in a spiritual sense. Broadly speaking, Paul has also transferred to the new sect, the Pagan cults with their conception of the magic effect of the victims' blood as being able to wash away all sins; besides effecting the re-birth into a new life of those who were received into the communion and permitted to partake of the consecrated bread and chalice.

“I believe that the extraordinary sanctity attributed by the Pagans to this and other sacraments has been an additional reason which has induced the zealous and far-seeing Paul to allow the Eucharist, with some other familiar Pagan rites, to be introduced into the Christian Church; and he has made them acceptable to the Jewish converts by giving them a spiritual meaning.

“Thus, by concessions like these, the new sect represented by Paul would gain a much easier entrance among the Pagans; and we must bear in mind that the conversion of the Gentiles had become to Paul the most important of his life’s enterprises, for the success and spread of the Gospel. Paul knew the success of this movement would mean the gradual conversion of the heathen world to the glory of the true, spiritual Israel, of which he was its most zealous and successful pioneer. Would not this be the fulfilment of one of God’s glorious promises—namely, that the heathens would yet become the inheritance of Israel? Now, the only successful policy

to carry this out would be the amalgamation of the Jews and the Gentiles, through the spiritual sacrifice which Paul preached, where Christ was the Son of God, and the spiritual sin-offering for the whole world—thus abolishing both Judaism and Heathendom, in their animal sacrificial cults, but fulfilling and uniting them in spiritual sacrifices of which the former had been but types, which must now be abolished for ever.”

When Apollos stopped, Reuben said:—“I quite follow your argument, and believe you are right; but as regards the Eucharist, it seems to me that Paul has also to some extent expanded what had been imparted to him by the Rabbis in the school of mystics, which I heard that he joined as a student when in Jerusalem.

“In their mystic doctrines they teach that Melchizedek, the priest of the Most High, brought out consecrated bread and wine as a symbol of worship, these being in those distant times the mystic elements of the divine presence. Therefore, in the visible

symbol of bread and wine, they worshipped the invisible presence of the Creator of heaven and earth. Therefore to Paul, Melchizedek prefigured the sacrifice which the coming Messiah was to institute in the Christian Church, from the same elements of bread and wine—instead of slaughtered animals, as were commanded afterwards in the Mosaic law.¹

“But leaving this subject, I must say that I do not understand how this belief in the transubstantiation of the elements could ever get a footing into the Pagan world among sensible people. It seems a far-fetched hypothesis, without any evidence whatever in its favour. Can you perhaps give any clue?”

Apollos replied:—“I understand the germs of this belief are found among the ancient Egyptians, and that the celebrated Pythagoras, who lived in Greece some 600 years ago, made it the basis of his philosophy. It consisted,

¹ Traces of the Eucharist in Judaism are also found for instance, in Exodus xviii. 12, Deut. xxxii. 38.

shortly stated, in an endless series of transformations—

- 1st. A continual transmigration of souls from one body to another, hence the doctrine of Metempsychosis.
- 2nd. A continual transubstantiation that happens both in the spiritual as also in the physical, world—called Metamorphosis.
- 3rd. Hence everything is continually changing, but nothing perishes. And lastly—
- 4th. Heraclitus' conception of the becoming of phenomena being the sole actuality, lies at the root of the above beliefs.

“If you read the Greek writers who have treated of the life and adventures of the gods they worshipped, you will find how the doctrine of Metamorphosis or Transubstantiation come out in nearly every story. Thus, among many, let me remind you that Clytie was transformed into a sunflower, Cadum into a serpent, Polydectes into a stone, Bances into

a tree; Tages sprang from a clod of earth; Cynus, king of Liguria, was transformed into a swan; Jupiter transformed ants into men; Cyparissus was made into a cypress tree. Apollos granted the gift to the daughter of Anius, that at their touch all things were transformed into corn and the streams into wine.

“From these few examples you will see that in the popular belief it was a usual occurrence that gods descended upon earth, and made their abode in animate or inanimate nature, or even into food, drink, and still more common objects; indeed, everything in Nature, even the most insignificant, was said to be possessed by spiritual beings, there being no exception whatever.

“Another idea held by nearly all people in antiquity, and even yet, is that it is quite possible to transmute the baser elements of nature into nobler ones; such as to produce silver, gold, or even precious stones. What is needed to obtain such a transubstantiation is to be in possession of the magician wand; and by incantation, known only by the priests, to bind or loose the spirits of the elements. This en-

abled them, therefore, to change the lower into the higher ; say brass into gold, lead into silver, common pebbles into sapphires and diamonds.

“What has helped to popularise this idea has been the primitive belief of the possibility of the elements of food and drink being also transubstantiated, and thereby becoming of divine virtue and influence; for among the Pagan nations their gods passed into their votaries, whenever they partook together of a sacred meal.

“Another superstition, current among our ancestors in the far past, and firmly believed even yet by many barbarous nations, was that by drinking the blood of a newly slain enemy, or by eating part of his flesh, especially the heart of the bravest of their foes, one would acquire the courage, skill or strength of the dead man which he possessed while alive—even his moral and intellectual qualities. Here you see the primeval belief of Transubstantiation, which has been afterwards transformed and expanded in other ways. Let me explain:—

“In ancient times, as you may know, the

gods on high whom men worshipped, and of whom they stood in dread, were cruel and bloodthirsty, and it was believed that they demanded human sacrifices in order to be propitiated. Afterwards, as civilisation made progress, and milder manners prevailed, the gods were conceived more human; hence domestic animals and fruits of the earth were substituted as offerings in their worship. In course of time, as agriculture became one of the most important occupations of civilised society, the offerings to the corn-god and the wine-god gained in importance and held a prominent place in the national worship.

“Now all these victims or offerings, whether from bloody or unbloody sacrifices, came in some way, by the superstition of those ages, to be identified with the respective deities in whose honours they were offered. There came to be a mystic or sacramental meaning and virtue attached to these sacrifices, even in the far distant India: because it was believed that in the sacramental meals the worshipper not only shared his food with the gods, but that

by this a communion or kinship between them was established, by which the gods imparted to the worshipper part of their own life and vigour, seeing the two were made one by a sacred covenant and a sacred sacrifice. Thus by this divine kinship which had been established, the worshippers were henceforth supposed to have received a share, however small, of the Divine Spirit, which had taken up its abode within them, so as to guide, to protect and to bless them. Indeed, their earthly life and future welfare were henceforth bound up together as one.

“But you may ask, How could such a miracle be believed in? Very simply, from the point of view of a heathen worshipper; for we saw that it was believed that a Divine Spirit could dwell in any material object. It was the officiating priests who claimed that upon them all depended, because they taught that sacred names, if properly and ritually pronounced by them, had a magic potency,—especially if aided by means of invocations and incantations. In this way they persuaded or

even commanded the gods on high to enter and dwell within the sacrificial bread and wine; hence when the worshippers partook of the consecrated elements, they believed that they were eating the flesh and drinking the blood of their respective gods by the intervention of the priests. The effect was to gain thereby the soul's salvation, growth in grace, and all other benefits, earthly or heavenly, which would result therefrom.

“In this way you can easily understand the great importance attached to the sacred meals, arising principally from belief in the miracle of Transubstantiation performed on their behalf by a sacred priesthood. It naturally became a distinct act of worship, with an elaborate liturgy; and was considered most important, both for the living and the dead.

“I need not enlarge; but from what I have said, you will see the great mistake which Paul unwittingly made by playing into the hands of a crafty Pagan priesthood.

“My own opinion is, that the upshot will be that many of the current beliefs of the Pagan

faith besides the Eucharist, will gradually be admitted into the Christian Church, in order to gain the Pagans over to the new beliefs.

“In other words, if ever the Christian faith becomes, at least nominally, the ruling ecclesiastical policy in the Roman Empire, it will probably retain the most essential dogmas which are found to-day in the Pagan creeds of Rome, Greece, and the Orient; but let us hope it will be in a higher and more refined form. Instead, however, of being a spiritual religion of heart service, as Jesus aimed at, I am afraid that there will continue to be an elaborate and even more intricate ceremonial, with a gorgeous ritual religious service; among which, in all likelihood, the miraculous host or mass will still continue to be one of the most important, for the reasons given.

“Let us live in hope, however, that even in the worst cases the leaven of our Christ's spiritual teaching and loving spirit will slowly permeate the mass of superstition, until, perhaps many milleniums hence, all these

will be abolished, as humanity advances in knowledge and truth, and the spiritual life will be the supreme element to mould the character and lives of individuals, as indeed of the world at large.

“Now in bringing this discussion to a close I will only say that I should not be in the least surprised if, when the Pagan Church has captured the Christian Church and used it for its own ambitious purposes under new names, then the biographies of our Christ will be interpolated and altered, so as to fit into, and support as infallible teaching, the Pagan ceremonial beliefs and rites.

THE DATE OF THE LORD'S SUPPER

“Let us now refer for a little to the records of the Lord's Supper, which in these biographies have already been altered considerably, evidently in order to support and enforce preconceived notions. Other alterations may follow later on, as more of the Pagan teaching gains entrance into the Christian Church.

“You will find that in the Logos biograph, which I have just completed, I have purposely left out the narrative of the Lord's Supper, because I think it ought not to have been inserted. I am of opinion that Jesus ate no Paschal meat, but only the usual evening's meal with His disciples, and that He used ordinary phrases in vogue in every pious Jewish household; also that he was captured *before* the Passover, and was even crucified *before* the feast opened.

“In the other biographies, I find they state that Jesus partook of the Paschal supper, and that he was captured the first night of the feast, and executed on the following day, which was the Passover.

“My view, however, is evidently more correct, for it is most unlikely—and against the Jews' own sacred laws and customs—that their ecclesiastical rulers, so great sticklers upon etiquette and form, would provoke this catastrophe when the solemn feast had actually commenced.

“It is easily seen, however, why the other

Editors chose this particular time, because, having presented Jesus as the symbolical Paschal lamb, who they believed had been foreordained to have his life forfeited in order to bring salvation to the world, they placed the drama of his death as having taken place on the first day of the Passover. Consequently, in order to complete the symbolic act they thought it necessary to present the Last Supper as having taken place on the previous Passover evening."

Reuben now said :—"I quite agree with you that the other Editors have been wrong—and it appears to have been done intentionally—in fixing the institution of the Lord's Supper one day later than the actual time.

"I can, therefore, understand the reason why the symbolical language was introduced by the Editors when describing the evening meal, where Jesus is said to have declared (but I believe quite erroneously) that the bread he offered them was his body and the wine his blood.

"I am of opinion that there are various

sources from which this figurative language may have been drawn by the mystic writer who assisted in the collection of materials for these biographies—which he has utilised as described, and which have been copied by the writers of the other two Gospels.

“Thus I remember that Philo uses this similitude in connection with his doctrine of the Logos, of whom he wrote so much. Again, as you have pointed out, these figurative expressions are in common use at the sacred feasts to which flock the Pagan devotees. They are assured by the Pagan priests that they actually eat the body and drink the blood of their respective deities, as they partake at the Communion of the sacred bread and wine. Now if the Pagan converts came to apply such ideas and language literally to the Christian sacraments, it would be disastrous for the young Christian Church.

“This simple ceremony would gradually open the door wide to false worship, to idolatry, to superstition, and to a fatal sway over

believers by a despotic, superstitious priesthood. These dangers the wise Jews have hitherto been able to resist, and have kept out of their worship and their religious life. I fear very much, however, that the conversion of the Gentiles will be a doubtful blessing for the purity of the Christian faith, unless indeed the greatest watchfulness is exercised ; otherwise it may lead to its corruption by the introduction of other Pagan ceremonials, such as, naming only a few, their ornate symbolic rituals, their false dogmas, and their proclamation of the infallibility of the priesthood and its head. From this and similar calamities, may Heaven defend the young society of Jesus, with its spiritual and simple worship."

Reuben closed his remarks with these words:—"To speak the plain truth, these four biographies contain both facts and fiction ; the latter drawn from the realms of tradition—symbols, myths, legends, poetic distortion and allegorical teaching. It was inevitable that credulity, ignorance and superstition should

have combined, and, perhaps without fraudulent intent, to have added much to the actual events in the life of Jesus; whose career, from one point of view as a reformer, was a protest against fanaticism, against the tyranny of priestcraft, against the emptiness of formalism and the vanity of mere profession.

“It is therefore not so much the actual events in the personal life of Jesus which have been collected and recorded from manifold sources, as it is that these biographies represent different schools of thoughts which were in existence among contemporary Jews and the generation which followed; hence we find that the compiler of one of the biographies lays stress upon the Messiah as having been the fulfilment of ancient prophecies. He has therefore composed the work, and illustrated it from this point of view. The rest have presented the life of Jesus from other points of view, and have illustrated it accordingly. Lastly, here is your own contribution, in which Jesus is presented as the Logos, the

Word of God; this being, therefore, a powerful weapon by which you are likely to gain the multitude of the mystic schools of Jews and Gentiles, who were followers of Philo during his lifetime.¹

“Your mystical life of Jesus is clearly written solely from this point of view, where actual events are of minor importance—compared to the spiritual principles which were clearly underlying his lofty mission upon earth.

“These ‘lives’ of Jesus cannot therefore, in any true sense, be looked upon as being inspired writings or infallible—and without the possibility of errors being found therein.

“But really, after all, it is not necessary to have such a work. It should be sufficient to try and separate the tares from the wheat, in

¹ We may divide these contributions to the biography as follows:—

1st. Contributions drawn more or less correctly from the life of the historical Messiah.

2nd. Contributions drawn more or less correctly from legendary sources.

3rd. Contributions drawn from ideal and metaphysical sources.

the 'lives' of Jesus which have now been collected, and wherein stands out strongly the undying belief which Jesus taught unceasingly and for which he heroically died—namely, his belief in

The Love and Fatherhood of God;

The Love and Brotherhood of Humanity.

and, as a corollary,

The Immortality and Eternal Blessedness of every soul of man—because throughout eternity God will be our Heavenly Father, and His children's welfare and perfection will ever be dear to his loving Father heart.

“In this faith of Jesus, the world will be blessed here, and glorified hereafter. It is really all that humanity needs to learn, in order to love and follow Jesus, and thus to establish the Kingdom of Heaven upon earth.”

BAPTISM

APOLLOS now turned the conversation to another subject, which had also occupied his attention. He said to Reuben:—

“Another ceremony introduced into our new Church is the one of Baptism, which, it seems to me, is also in danger of gradually being made conform to heathen practices and beliefs. The rite of Baptism you find among the ancient Persians, Hindus, Egyptians, Greeks and Romans. We must remember that running waters such as rivers, being sources of fertility and purification, were of old, and even yet, invested with a sacred character; because they were supposed to be permeated with the divine essence, the miracle of which had been performed by the heathen priests. Therefore such consecrated waters were held to cleanse men from guilt; no sin

was too heinous but it could be removed, no character was too black but it could be washed away by the sacred waters. In short, by Baptism, this mystical purificatory rite, it was possible to attain to the purification of the soul. I have heard that in the far-lying India, they have a graphic way of illustrating this, for the officiating *guro* or priest rubs mud on the candidate and then plunges him into the water, saying: 'O supreme Lord, this man is impure, like the mud on his body; but as water cleanses him from this dirt, so do Thou free him from his sins!'

"In the Mithraic mysteries, the rite of Baptism is likewise administered to adults during initiation, in order to wash away their sins, the priests by their magic having been able to impregnate the waters with divine efficacy. In ancient Egypt the rite of Baptism was also performed, and those who were initiated into the mysteries of Isis were baptized. It was called the 'water of purification.' It was thought that Baptism absolutely cleansed the soul, and the person was

said to be 'regenerated.' There were in existence complete rituals of purification for this purpose; indeed it was believed by nearly all ancient nations, just as it continues to be everywhere, that man is excluded from perfect union with God by his imperfections, his uncleanness and his sins, and that the only means of removing these hindrances are by Baptism and by the sacred meals with the gods.

The rite of Baptism became also common among the Jews after the Captivity, especially when they admitted proselytes to their faith from heathenism. Thus you see the intention of all the various forms of Baptism is identical: for water, being the natural means of physical cleaning, has been also the universal symbol of spiritual purification. Indeed, seeing that the sacrament of Baptism was supposed to contain a full and absolute expiation of sin, and the soul thereby instantly restored to its original purity and entitled to the promise of eternal salvation, there were, and are, many heathens who put off this rite until

they are on their deathbed, as in this way they think they will be quite sure of entering heaven without a single stain of sin on their consciences.

“As we might expect, this superstitious rite did not escape the satire of a man like Ovid, who exclaimed, when he saw a Baptism—

‘Ah, easy fools, to think that a whole flood
‘Of water ever can purge the stain of blood.’

As you may know, the goddess Nundina took her name from the ninth day, on which all male children were sprinkled with holy water, *i.e.* water taken from some running stream or holy well, after first having been blessed and consecrated by the heathen priest in order to make the rite efficacious.

“Another Baptism, perhaps still more ancient in use among the heathens, is to be baptized with “*fire*.” I believe it is still common in many places in India, and among barbarous nations; indeed, it was practised at one time in Israel, as it was later by the

Romans and others.¹ It was done by passing the worshipper several times through the flames of a sacred fire, for purification; hence, you find an echo of this in a symbolical form put into the mouth of John the Baptist in the biography according to Matthew, as I have also employed this figure of speech in the Logos Gospel.

“Before leaving this interesting subject, let me point out to you that it is quite common among the heathens to use holy water for sprinkling on persons on entering a temple. The idea among these superstitious Gentiles is that people are surrounded everywhere by untold myriads of evil, spiteful demons, who pursue them wherever they go, trying to fill their minds with wicked thoughts and desires—more especially ξ on entering a holy place for worship. The moment, however, one enters it, if the precaution is taken to sprinkle themselves with the lustral con-

¹ In the Greek it was the fire baptism of Demophoon. In the mystery cult this was connected with the Dionysian rites, symbolised by blood and fire.

secrated water from the urn at the porch of the basilica, then all these invisible demons fly away in terror at the sight of the consecrated water, which protects their victims against Satan's assaults !

“The sanctity of the heathen priests is considered so great by their worshippers, that it is firmly believed that not only by a word or a gesture, but simply by ‘breathing’ upon a person, are they able to impart blessings and drive to flight evil spirits which come to tempt people with wicked suggestions. So holy are these priests believed to be, so filled with miraculous power, that even from the tips of their fingers when in the act of blessing the congregation, or by the laying on of hands, is it believed that there flows an influence for good to the worshipping multitude. Even their garments are believed to partake of these virtues. No wonder, therefore, that the worshippers stand in awe and holy fear of these mediators between them and their divinities, whether good or evil ; as the priests pretend they have complete control

over the unseen world with all its divinities, whom they can force by their commands to fulfil their behest.

“As you know also, manifold kinds of charm or amulets are worn by young and old, to ward off the influence of evil spirits or drive away diseases and dangers; in fact, the common people everywhere in the Roman Empire are believers in sorcery, witchcraft, the evil eye and enchantments. They worship idols, images, relics, with spirits, evil and good. They believe also that there are genii inhabiting every grotto, every tree, every spring, river, mountain; even to be found in every rustling leaf driven by the wind. Amidst such a dense maze of ignorance, superstition, prejudice and fanaticism, how can you expect the spirit of truth, which is the spirit of Christ, to penetrate and enlighten humanity? It must be a question of millenniums before the spirit of truth gains the victory over the spirit of error, entrenched in these gigantic superstitions, where fear is the ruling feature of people’s religious faith.

Their divinities are conceived by them as powers whose wrath is to be deprecated and their favour besought in order to induce them through the priesthood, by the employment of their spells, exorcism, imprecations or expiatory rites, to abstain from doing harm to the worshippers. Truly, to these Pagans, it is a worship of cringing fear from the birth to the grave !”

ASCETICS

“THERE is no conception of God which does not affect our conduct or aspirations, in all their bearings. We see this exemplified in the life adopted by the various classes of Ascetics in the world.

“THUS, in Israel of old there were prophets and others who retired from the world for a shorter or longer period—sometimes for the sake of rest, or meditation, or to escape the persecution of princes. Such were Elisha, Elijah, and the sons of the prophets, who built themselves huts on the banks of the Jordan and forsook for a time the noise, tumult, and hateful idolatry of the outer world. Likewise we hear of Jonadab, the son of Rechab, and his children, who dwelt in the wilderness.

“THE same is the case with our own sect of

Essenes—composed as you know chiefly of elderly men, who have retired from the world, with its bustle and excitements, its grasping selfishness, and its murderous spirit, in order to pass the closing years of their pilgrimage in quietness and in meditation, generally in some healthy and secluded spot.

“Now our Essene brethren, as worshippers of Jehovah, the one only true God of love, mercy, and righteousness, dwell in peace and harmony in their retreats; their hearts being filled with love and adoration to God, with charity and brotherly kindness to all mankind. They stand in no fear or dread of evil spirits, nor do they require priests to exorcise these for them; for they recognise that both good and evil are under the control of their Heavenly Father.

“Here you see the Ascetics under a favourable aspect, with their peace of mind and cheerfulness of spirit; owing chiefly to their elevated conceptions of God Jehovah, whom alone they worship with freedom and gladness of heart.

“Let us look now for a little upon another class of Ascetics, who have imbibed their ideas of God from Oriental sources, by which fears, torments and hard thoughts of God have entered their souls, so much so, that they try to gain their gods’ favour by a life of seclusion, by austerity, and even by self-torture, which they think must please them. In the conception of these misguided Ascetics, the Highest of all is removed to an infinite distance from the world and from all human interests. The world they believe to be given over to the reign of the Spirit of Evil, who with his unnumbered millions of evil angels, rules everywhere and makes this earth accursed; hence to these Ascetics the world is meantime a prison-house to the soul. They look with contempt upon all its glitter and charms. The aim, therefore, of all such perverted minds is to get rid as quickly as possible of this body of shame, the temptress of all evil. Thus, by mortification of the senses and the passions, by rigorous exercise of self-denial, such as fasting, watching, and pray-

ing, are their gods' favours sought to be obtained.

“These Ascetics believe they are always sinning, and that penance is therefore always necessary; hence, in order to obtain forgiveness, they make it their study to try and detach their souls from the fetters of the body, by contemplation, by abstinence, by solitude and by bodily torments—leading a hard, comfortless and miserable life, in filth and wretchedness, so that thereby they may trample more easily upon the cravings of the body and unite themselves nearer to the gods by the emancipation of their souls from the fetters of this vile body, wherein all evil is centred. This happy event will take place when these prison bars of the body are at last broken down, for then the immortal spirit will be free and will rise to its immortal home of purity and glory. In this miserable and doomed world there is no hope for any one; for all Ascetics who have bid adieu to sin find that, even in the desert, the arch enemy of the soul will pursue them to their ruin if he can.

“From what I have said, you see, therefore, that fear and dread of the gods and the spirits of the invisible world are the main-springs in the religion of all Pagans. Sometimes they try to secure salvation by their own efforts, as in the case of the Ascetics; or else they flock to the priests, to get protection and absolution from all their sins by their intercessions—whether at Baptism, the Lord’s Supper, or the worship of consecrated shrines, by consulting magicians or sorcerers, and in hundreds of other ways.

“All may be summed up in the belief that the God of this world is the Evil One, of whom all stand in awe and constant fear.”

THE ROMAN EMPIRE

REUBEN answered:—“What you say as to ‘fear’ being the key-note of the religious sentiments among the Pagans is quite true; and it explains the low level of the religious life among them. Indeed, my firm belief is, that the progress and happiness of humanity rests upon the conversion of the world to the faith which Jesus our Christ preached—namely, the proclamation of the Love of God as our Heavenly Father, and the mutual love which should exist between all members of the human family. This is the new leaven which will gradually permeate with its beautiful lesson the whole of mankind, and whereby will be established at last upon earth the Kingdom of love, truth, and righteousness.

“Let me expand this idea a little further.

There has been from the first a "Christ-cult" among all ancient religions, *i.e.* the worship and imitation of the highest ideal they could conceive at the time; but high above all these, Jesus our Christ, his cult, will be found to be the truest, the loftiest and the noblest of all which have preceded him.

"All will acquiesce in this, when they come to realise that the Christ spirit of Jesus influences and regulates completely both the intellectual and the emotional parts of man's nature, in the following sublime manner:—

1st. It shows itself, by having a passionate love of truth and righteousness.

2nd. It shows itself, by having a passionate love of God our Heavenly Father, in His unity and spirituality; perfect in all His lofty attributes, and therefore the most lovable, attractive, and beautiful Being, who is also our Creator, Upholder, and Saviour.

3rd. It shows itself, by having a passionate love of humanity: because in their origin and destiny all men are one, all being children of the Highest. The human race is therefore bound together in one family, and should be united in a loving brotherhood and fellowship, with a willing co-operation for the mutual benefit of all. Thereby only will be reached a higher level of perfection and happiness.

“Now, let us take the last first—namely, man’s relation to man, as seen in operation in the Roman Empire and as we find it around us in our own day.

“The lofty conception of ‘brotherly love’ by which Jesus wished that all his followers should regulate their social life; this spiritual heaven he bequeathed as a heavenly gift to humanity, so that it silently and gradually might overcome all opposition and permeate with its blissful influence every relation of life. It has truly come at a time in the

world's history when it is particularly needed: for look where you like, and you will see that quite opposite, yea hostile, principles hold sway — such as hatred, strife, selfishness, treachery, and a host of other degrading vices, proving that the brutal nature of man is still much in the ascendancy. You need not go further than follow the rise of the Roman Empire, which in course of centuries has at last become the greatest world-power the ages have ever seen, but reached only by craft and violence—yea, by wading through rivers of blood in order to conquer and rule over other nations.

“It is in our day a military despotism, ruled by unscrupulous Proconsuls, mostly base adventurers, who are hated and feared for their cupidity, their treachery, their overbearing pride, their luxurious and licentious living, their robberies, extortions, unjust taxations, and by trampling upon the rights and liberty of the despairing and prostrate people. Has such a rule of brute force the elements of permanency? Nay, other ancient

Empires, which likewise overran the earth and conquered far and wide for a time, are examples of the fate which is in store for the present corrupt Roman Empire. For a long time yet it may look prosperous outwardly; but meanwhile, by upholding slavery, oppression and unrighteousness, and by the ruling classes giving themselves over to effeminacy and licentious living, decay and disintegration are silently and surely taking place, to overthrow it in God's own good time—and by whatever agency He may employ for this purpose.

“Now, what will this spiritual leaven of ‘brotherly love, helpfulness and co-operation’ do for humanity in ages to come, when its blissful influence has permeated society at large? Let me shortly sum them up, contrasting ‘what is now’ with ‘what might be,’ yea, ‘will be.’ Instead of a rule by despotism and corruption, and in the interest of the few, there will be a friendly federation of the world's scattered nations; a commonwealth of honest, God-fearing men, with a

brotherly co-operation in the industrial and agricultural life, and with peaceful arbitration in all difficulties which may arise affecting nations, society at large or individuals. There will thus be a rule of fairness for the many, as well as for the few, under the control of the people and for the people. The social life will be built upon one common foundation, namely, the lofty principle of 'brotherly love' as a guide to conduct; this being the spiritual element in the life of the people, which will closely unite them in a social compact, by love and righteousness, which are the only true cements of union in a nation.

"A society will thus be formed upon earth with one heart and one soul, which will live as one family, and lead a common spiritual life in a loving companionship with God; for the noblest blossom of human life will ever fix its roots deeply in union with God, the Father of our spirits—beloved, trusted and admired.

"Thus our Christ will for ever have the honour of having created the higher social

life, based upon love and brotherhood, a new union of man with man; which will fulfil the high mission of spreading around them, peace, helpfulness, charity and love, in all relationships of life for the benefit of the whole human race. In short, in everything, this love of the brethren will be conformable to the nature and destiny of man, enabling him therefore to live in harmony with the deepest requirements and aspirations of human existence upon earth. Each soul will therefore be prepared without fear or dread, yea, looking forward with bright hopes and a heart overflowing with gratitude, thankfulness and love to God, to enter the Father's everlasting Kingdom upon high; which has been prepared from eternity for all of His children, as Jesus believed himself and taught to his disciples."

TRUTH

REUBEN continued:—"I have said so much upon our first head, that I must be shorter with the rest. Let us in the first place consider our Lord's passionate love of Truth. Now, if Jesus was a true revealer of God's sublime character in its fulness, he would not alone have revealed God as Love and Mercy; but he would also have revealed the equally important fact, that this God of Love is likewise the God of Truth and Righteousness, these being both also of God's Essence. Now we find that this was exactly what happened: for throughout his short career as the Messiah, Jesus lost no opportunity of elevating God's Truth and Righteousness in his teaching—so much so, that in the new biography you will find that Jesus claims himself to be the 'Truth,' by being the

revealer of God's august character in that respect also. By the 'Spirit of our Christ' is meant not only the spirit he manifested upon earth, of love to God and love to man, but also that in all his speaking, acting or thinking, he was animated by the spirit of Truth and Justice.

"Let us remember these are the bonds of union in society, and the basis of human confidence, friendship and happiness. Unfortunately we live in an age where the sacredness of Truth and right conduct are little esteemed, hence deception, fraud, hypocrisy, dissimulation and licentiousness are so rife throughout the Empire.

"Let us also remember what Plato said, that there is nothing so delightful as the hearing and speaking of Truth, therefore, by imitating God's beautiful character of Truth and Righteousness, let us, like Jesus, be enthusiastic followers of these virtues, which ennoble and glorify social life and the world at large.

"This, therefore, is the leaven of divine perfection, which will gradually regenerate

the world, for in the highest sphere of being, Truth, Righteousness and Love, are one. There is, indeed, a natural affinity between all truths and all forms of goodness. Knowledge is only worth having if it is founded upon Truth. In its deepest aspect, Truth is the centre wherein all things repose, the type of eternity and one of the brightest jewels in God's adorable nature. Time does not permit me to expand these sentiments from our Holy Scriptures, but at your leisure study the Psalms, the Proverbs, and the writings of the Prophets, and you will be surprised at the great number of passages which all extol God's Truth, Righteousness, and Mercy. These are held up to our imitation; and as an incentive we are told that they are of greater value by far than aught else upon earth for which humanity has been striving. Truth is the day-star from on high that shines when all is dark around us. It points the right path by which we shall go leading to safety and honour. Therefore, let us love Truth, just as Jesus loved it; let us

prize it beyond all fame, power, and enjoyment. Let us adhere to it fearlessly and loyally, through good report and through bad. Let us remember that if we are clothed through life's pilgrimage in the beautiful garments of Truth, Righteousness, and Love, then we reveal ourselves by our walk and conversation to others as belonging to Heaven's true aristocracy, and become a blessing and example for good, as Jesus became to all around him to the end of the world—yea, and after.

SEARCHING FOR TRUTH

“The ‘Spirit of Jesus’ as the leaven in humanity is not only seen as ‘speaking the truth in love,’ but also as searching for truth as if for hidden treasures; and it is in this aspect that I wish to dwell upon it for a little. It seems a short maxim, but behold the whole of man's civilisation is hidden therein. It is this ardent spirit, loving truth for its own sake, that will lead humanity onwards and upwards to new conquests over Nature's forces,

will expose errors and wrong conceptions, and will reach the underlying reality. This spirit of truth will sweep away, little by little, all the gross superstitions arising from ignorance and vain imaginings which now encompass us on every side, and thereby at last the truth will make humanity free. The character of the Supreme has been so much distorted by ignorant and barbaric imaginings, that it was impossible for humanity to love and trust such a caricature. Happily our Christ has revealed God in all His attractive beauty and loveliness; has shown also that humanity is destined to be partakers of the Divine nature—not only a moral likeness, but in a higher sense; even to an actual participation of the human in the Divine, for we shall love and be loved by Him for ever. This is the goal of man's spiritual aspiration, that the glory of Divine love is reciprocating in fullest measure our imperfect love and devotion.

“Now, the ‘search for truth’ leads to the progress of humanity. It makes men think, reflect, observe and compare. They

discover, they invent, they work out these practical questions and problems which relate to the laws of Nature, as also to Society and the general advancement of humanity.

“The whole of Nature lies open for them, and its untold wealth and treasures may be won by the aspiring soul for the good of humanity. These pioneers of ‘Truth’ in their enthusiasm consecrate laborious days and nights to finding out the secrets of the operation of Heaven’s laws, in all their wonderful complexity and far-reaching effects; yea, with the souls of heroes, they willingly lay down their lives in the cause of truth and righteousness. They are convinced that not for themselves alone do the wheels of time move forward, but that they bear all things onwards to future ages, when the children of men shall be blessed by the result of the labours they have bequeathed to them. Thus, having been helpful in their day and generation, they aid in the advancement of human life, in its well-being and happiness, and in the world’s civilisation.

“Who can imagine what progress the

world will make in another couple of milleniums, if the human mind is left free—as was the case with the Greeks in their best days of liberty—to search for the true, the good, and the beautiful, without let or hindrance, and utilise the result for the good and the delight of men? Behold! they tried to explore almost the whole circle of human knowledge, and yet, after all, so immense is the heirloom and heritage which still waits upon the searchers after truth, that we are standing only yet on the very threshold of the Palace of Truth, which the spirit invites us to enter.

“One danger, however, I see before us; and that is, that despotism, intolerance, ignorance, fanaticism, and superstition, combined with the aid of the civil powers with their fire and sword, may try to check the progress of truth, and thus stop the advancement of humanity on the path of freedom; not only check its conquests in the world of Nature and in the higher realms, but also prevent and prohibit them exposing errors and superstitions which have crept into the world’s manifold

religious systems—including our own new faith as well.

“This may happen, more especially, if the holy Church of Christ should be absorbed by the corrupt Pagan Church of Rome, along with a host of ancient cults with degraded and superstitious forms of worship which have crowded into the Empire. There would certainly be unity of a sort, but not the one that Christ aimed at; for the mass of error and superstition which would be absorbed into the Church of Christ would be appalling. And if such a mongrel Church of Rome acquires despotic power by its alliance with the State, woe to the progressive spirit of Christ in the Church! It would get a check, maybe for many centuries, until perhaps the day would come when once more the ‘leaven of the Christ Spirit’ will get a chance to do her appointed work in humanity; not only to speak the truth and stand up for the truth, as taught by Christ, but also to ‘search for truth’ in his spirit of enthusiasm.

“Behold! the long ages of darkness, super-

stition, and persecution will then fly away; and once more the human spirit will be free to question Nature, to enlighten humanity in the truth, and to live the true Christ life. Taught by bitter experience, it will learn carefully to keep in check the reactionary forces of violence and superstition, and to watch henceforth with double care the preservation of the liberties so dearly bought by the blood of the martyrs. Thus gradually it will bring light and truth into every part of the Christian Church, and into every other religious system in the world, even the most bigoted adherents, who have hitherto clung to the past and its errors, will come to see and confess the truth as it is in Jesus, and throw off its chains of superstition and erroneous teaching.

“The world will come to acknowledge that a higher social life was created by Jesus, a community was established by him in which all that is noble and beautiful in human life will find a home and a warm welcome. They will love and admire Jesus our Christ as an

encircling and ever expanding ideal, and they will come to judge of all eternal values and verities by the standard laid down by our Saviour—and the few but divine principles by which Jesus lived and died, whereby he glorified God upon earth and by which we also may do the same.”

SACERDOTALISM

APOLLOS thanked Reuben for his enlightening remarks, and said that the great number of conflicting creeds which existed in the world was to all reflecting persons a most perplexing subject. He asked if Reuben could enlighten him further, and harmonise some of these manifold views.

Reuben replied:—"It is a wide subject, but to sum it up in a few words, we might classify them in a twofold manner:—

1st. Those who worship God in the spirit.

2nd. Those who worship God through symbols and a priesthood.

You find these two conceptions running through the whole history of Israel. You see, for instance, how the prophets and poets represent the former school, while the ecclesiastical powers, which cling to ritual and sacrificial services, represent the latter.

“Again, in our own time, our sect, the Essenes, represent the former, while the Sadducees, Scribes, and Pharisees are the representatives of the latter. If the world is looked upon as a school, then the worshippers of God through symbols are the children in the infant class who are taught by pictures, while the other party is the one which has advanced by education to the higher class. In a school, however, children are not expected to be always stationary and always occupying the lower classes, for the duty of the teachers should be to advance them to higher stages by proper training. Unfortunately it sometimes happens, however, that, either in order to retain the school fees as long as possible, or by sheer ignorance, the teacher’s interest lies in keeping back those occupying the lowest forms, instead of pushing them on to other teachers better qualified to introduce them to the higher and spiritual lessons. This point of view, of a gradual education of humanity, will perhaps illustrate my meaning in the simplest and shortest compass possible.”

Apollos remarked :—" Your view is certainly to the point, but I remember now that when I resided at Hazazon Tama, where I sat at the feet of the venerable Indian sage Ananda, he once illustrated this subject in the following way.

" He said that nature always repeats herself in her operations where the causes are identical. This was also to be seen in the history of nations, and thereby a clue was given by which to read or forecast the future of the world from past events; as Isaiah hath said, 'Behold, the former things are come to pass again.'

" Ananda referred to the new cult of Jesus, which he represented as another and even a loftier attempt to introduce into humanity a higher or spiritual worship of God based upon Monotheism, but independent of rituals, ceremonies, or animal sacrifices. His opinion was, that Jesus' mission would ultimately succeed; but only after many centuries, or perhaps millenniums of struggle with the other school, which advocated and clung stubbornly to the

symbolic or formal worship under the control of the priesthood, and which the latter claimed as being the most important and effectual one whereby to gain Heaven's favour and save the souls of men. Ananda illustrated this from the religious history of India before Buddha appeared, and he prophesied that, if the spiritual creed of Jesus was gradually captured and incorporated into the heathen religious systems, which were all based upon symbolic worship, then the following signs drawn from India's and other Pagan history might be looked for as the fruit of this unholy alliance:—

“*1st.* The Church would claim to be a divinely-guided ecclesiastical organisation, with ecclesiastical supremacy, furnished with sacred and sacramental rites. It would be a Religion of Authority, with fear as its motive power; instead of being a religion of the Spirit, with love as its motive power.

“*2nd.* The claim of absolute infallibility of their sacred books, by dogmatic insistence on their plenary inspiration.

“*3rd.* The priesthood will claim to be the sole authoritative interpreter of the sacred books and traditions of old, which ought to be kept from the common people as much as possible. It will come to mean that the Church is the sole depository of Truth.

“*4th.* The Church will claim to have infallible authority, being, as stated, the one divinely-appointed depository of all truth. An explicit and implicit obedience will be demanded, which includes within its range the intellect as well as the conscience.

“*5th.* Salvation will be claimed as lying in its sacraments and rituals, the mediation of its priesthood, and the acceptance of its creed.

“*6th.* The Church will claim for herself the high and exclusive prerogative of infallibility in doctrine, morals, and discipline. It will aim, therefore, at being the supreme judge in all religious disputes, and from her decision there will be no appeal. She only will decide all controversies respecting matters of faith and practice.

“*7th.* As it is among some of the Pagan

cults, the central doctrine may be the standing miracle of Transubstantiation of the sacred meal claimed to have been entrusted by Heaven to the priesthood as being God's representative upon earth, after the words of consecration have been uttered by the appointed priests. The mass is claimed to be a true propitiatory sacrifice. It goes to enrich and almost to deify the priesthood in its Ecclesiastical Supremacy.

"8th. The sacred bread, even the 'host,' will become an object of adoration. This word is chosen because 'hostia' means a 'victim' or 'sacrifice,' the miraculous transformation of a wafer of bread into the actual living God suffering the punishment of death as a sacrifice.

"9th. There will be believed to be works of supererogation, or works done beyond what the gods require, and which enable the priests to procure forgiveness of other people's sins by their own extra merits.

"10th. Souls will be helped out of purgatory, or in their transmigrations, by the intercession

and prayers of the priests, and often also by their austerities, which give them power over the gods on high.

“11th. Indulgences—the priests will grant plenary indulgences, the debt of temporal punishments.

“Summing up the foregoing, it will be their fundamental doctrine that an implicit, unquestioning faith and submission is due to their infallible Church, with its tenets, teaching and dogmas. In order to maintain their supreme position unchallenged, they will claim also that it is no part of their teaching to give reasons for the doctrines they teach; indeed, such tendencies are necessarily to be sternly suppressed in all their votaries. In consequence, everything in their service and creeds will as far as possible be enveloped in mysticism and miracles. Their votaries will furthermore be trained in a ritual addressed almost exclusively to the senses and imagination, by which means gross superstition and ignorance will continue to prevail everywhere; and it will thus become easy for the priesthood

to keep control over the souls and bodies of the worshippers and maintain their despotic sway, which they claim to be of divine origin, and for which they also claim to have divine sanction.

“Now, these are specimens of what Buddha found in India and elsewhere, as having gradually been developed and systematised out of a simple symbolic worship. These, or similar ones, Ananda foresaw would also be introduced gradually in the new Church of Christ, if the Pagan Church absorbed it; for nearly all these blasphemous assumptions or claims were already found more or less in other Pagan cults, besides in India.

“Ananda added, however, the following sensible remarks:—‘From what I have said you will see that in India the entire tendency was to induce men to substitute in their worship mere form for the reality of religion; and to stifle thoughts or the soul’s search for light and truth, especially the highest of all truth, which consists in the soul’s direct communion with the Highest without any

intermediaries whatever, whether in earth or heaven. Yes, experience has shown that this direct worship is the only one which inspires the heart with gratitude to God for His condescension, His grace and His love. In this worship only the soul rests truly contentedly upon God, for His protection and guidance throughout all life's difficult and dangerous paths; while lastly, love and gratitude combined will induce the soul to an active obedience to God's will in all things. In this way true worship is seen to bless the soul of man and the whole world.' ”

Reuben answered Apollos by saying:—“ A thousand thanks for all the interesting information you have given me. I am, however, greatly astonished to learn of such terrible spiritual despotism having been tolerated in India for ages; but do you really mean to say that Ananda truly affirmed that in India the priesthood had claimed to be God's representatives and incarnation upon earth; that they also claimed that their sacred books were infallible records, of which

the Brahmins were the sole interpreters; that the salvation of the souls solely depended upon their sacraments and rituals, of which the priests were the sole custodians; and more than this, that they were also the sole mediators between God and men, that they had power to forgive sins, give indulgences, and help people out of the intermediate state or transmigration, with other equally astounding claims?"

Apollos replied:—"Certainly, for Ananda proved this from the various sacred scriptures—the Rig, Soma, Yajur and Atharva Vedas, besides the Upanishads; and above all, from the famous ancient law book the Dharma Manu, in which the Brahman caste is exalted and wherein their high privileges are defended. Ananda said, however, that this portion, with many others in the sacred volumes, were all interpolations by the Brahmins themselves, but all of which had helped them to become in course of time the undisputed spiritual rulers over India, even ranking higher in influence than the princes of the various

realms, whose policy the priests regulated and dictated. The State was practically absorbed into the Church, and the priest caste was acknowledged by high and low as being God's representatives upon earth—who claimed homage, and was even accorded worship by the ignorant masses.

“Now it is because the wise Ananda knew so thoroughly what had taken place in India for very many centuries, along with his philosophical cast of mind, that he read the future of the Christian cult from these priest-ridden times of India. Of course the forecast was made on the assumption that the Roman Pagan cult would by-and-by incorporate the Christian cult, and which Ananda feared would take place—after which, as had happened in India, a priesthood would be sure to rise, which would become a consecrated order, an instrument of salvation, and would rule in spiritual matters as despotic as the Cæsars had shown themselves in the conquest of the world, or as seen in the Brahmins' rule in India. Not only so,

but, like the Brahmins, the Roman priesthood would be sure to imitate them, in claiming that they were Heaven's offspring upon earth, and therefore infallible in everything connected with the worship of the Church—its sacraments, rituals, doctrines, beliefs, discipline; and, in fact, they would in all likelihood so arrange matters that the souls and bodies of all believers were practically in the hands of the priests, not only for this life, but for their fate after death: because they claimed mediatorial authority between God and man, so that without their intervention, by sacraments, rituals and otherwise, no soul in India could be saved. Hence, instead of being a religion of love, liberty and progress, it became a religion of terror, bondage and stagnation; thus frustrating for ages all attempts at remedying the many moral, social, political, national and ecclesiastical evils of India."

Reuben answered:—"I confess I know very little of the civil or religious history of India. Did Ananda tell you also how this

yoke of a despotic and corrupt priesthood in India was overthrown?"

Apollos said:—"Yes, and a most interesting story it was. Ananda began by saying that when wickedness and idolatry reach the zenith of their power, and all looks dark and hopeless for the remnant of God's people, then the Highest, in His providence, sends the longed-for delivery, and in His own unexpected way. The world will never outgrow the necessity for consecrated personalities, to become the vehicles of executing God's will. Let us also remember that God works out His wondrous plans for the world's education, uplifting and salvation, with apparently humble instruments; therefore you will find that it is generally not by the voice of thunder, but by the still small voice which speaks to the heart and conscience of a soul dear to Him, that He effects His redemptive purposes of love upon earth. In India it was the same; one single individual was chosen by God to overthrow the gigantic evils and superstitious worship which had

kept the most thickly populated country in the world in the chains of a despotic power—a caste of fallible, conceited men, who claimed supernatural gifts and who crushed beneath their iron heels any one who dared to raise a word of protest against their blasphemous claims and oppressions.

“This benefactor of India and the whole of the human race was called Buddha, a poor wandering ascetic—unknown to fame, without influential support, yea, on the contrary, with the whole of the wealth and power of India opposed to his self-imposed task. All were against him except One, and that was God in the Highest; who, as His dowry for the work to which He had called him, had endowed Buddha with wisdom, with a heart overflowing with love, tenderness and sympathy, with the eloquence of a seraph, with a soul of courage, patience, and self-control; as well as with a self-sacrificing spirit, ready to give himself for the salvation of the whole world. He began his mission, and lo! the down-trodden, despised natives

in the dust, hitherto in fear and awe of their priests, heard the heavenly voice through Buddha, which inspired their souls with hope and enthusiasm. They learned of their heaven-born freedom, of the immortal value of their souls, that they could reach heaven and have their sins forgiven, with God's blessings upon their work upon earth; and all this, without the help of a single priest or by his intercessions or sacrifices on their behalf.

“It was Buddha who told them that Heaven's Palace of Glory was open to every seeking soul without money or price, and that the priests had betrayed their trust by erecting barriers between God and the human soul—lofty barriers which hid entirely the beautiful palace; and that the priests traded upon their ignorance by levying heavy tolls upon them, and usurped the privilege as being the only ones on earth who were mediators between God and man, the only ones therefore who were privileged to transact their business and interests with

heaven, or to save their souls. These miserable and blasphemous barriers, flimsy and clumsy, Buddha with one sweep banished out of sight; and lo! the humblest soul of man saw to his delight that Heaven's golden gates were wide open to receive and make welcome every soul who wished to enter and see the King in His beauty, and to partake of His exceeding mercy and guidance, to help them through life's pilgrimage, and bring them at last to dwell with Himself in glory. In other words, Buddha's reformation included the idea of individual responsibility to God, the supremacy of the human conscience and the direct access of the soul with God without any earthly intermediaries whatever."

Apollos continued:—"I remember listening with joy to this redemption from spiritual bondage of the poor natives in India, but this idea of only 'one man' being called to effect this wonderful revolution seemed to me to be something quite exceptional. I took, therefore, the opportunity

after the lecture was over, to ask Ananda to give me some more information, which the aged saint gave me with pleasure. He referred me to our own Holy Scriptures, which he knew thoroughly, having studied each of its books; and he pointed out how in the Holy Land of the Jews, Jehovah had acted upon the same principle throughout their whole chequered career. Thus when the chosen people were to learn and turn from idol worship, and to worship one God only, it was one individual, namely Abraham, who was chosen. When delivery was coming to the Jews in their bondage in Egypt, it was one man, Moses, who was called; and so on, from time to time through many ages, God called one prophet here, another prophet or psalmist there, to stand up as His spokesman, to fan up again the true 'spiritual worship' in a nation prone to idolatry and surrounded by heathen nations, all sunk completely in abominable practices and symbolic worship.

“‘Let us remember,’ Ananda said, ‘whether

in India, in Egypt, in Israel or in the rest of the Roman Empire, it is the "spiritual worship" alone which can overthrow idolatry and transform this world from a wilderness of hatred and sin to a paradise of love, holiness and righteousness. Love, as we have been long in realising, constitutes the essential quality of God—not an indulgent affection, but love in its highest sense as that in God which seeks, above all, the perfection of all His creatures, and He trains them therefore by sorrow as by joy to the attainment of this end.'

"I remember that Ananda closed our conversation by saying:—'The waves of idolatry and priestcraft, with grossest superstition amongst all classes, were rampant in India when Buddha arose as its spiritual Saviour. Far be it for me to condemn any individuals among them, for we may be sure there were pietists and most devout persons all the time among the Brahman caste, even in the darkest period of their rule. We can only speak of the system as a whole, and

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alas ! the sad fact remains that India, instead of prospering under the despotic priest rule, sank century after century deeper and deeper into poverty, wretchedness, ignorance, and superstition ; the country from north to south was in a chronic state of warfare, instigated chiefly by the ambition of the Brahmins, who held high rank also as the magicians of the armies, by whose curses their enemies were scattered on the day of battle. Thus the Brahmins flourished amazingly, growing rich, powerful, proud, and dominant, claiming, as said, even worship, as being God's image and vicegerents upon earth, and that it was only through them therefore that God heard the prayers of the worshippers, and that only through them could gifts or sacrifices be rendered to God ; also only through them came protection from evil spirits, or the remission of their sins. The result was, however, as might be expected : for the more superstition and ignorance increased among the masses, the better for the Brahmins,—hence, they proved a curse and a calamity

to the country, until Buddha was raised up to check and overthrow their mischievous sway. If ever the Christian Church should pass through such ages of tribulation and spiritual despotism, no doubt in God's own time the corrupt worship of symbols and rituals, with miraculous sacraments, will be overthrown by men chosen for the work by God Himself; so we may calmly leave the future of the Christian Church to His guidance and protection.'

"Of these reformers Ananda prophesied that one would at length arise to condemn the worship of a Trinity or polytheism in whatever form it appears, and in its stead preach the 'Unity of God,' there being only one God to worship.

"Another reformer would also arise, sooner or later, who would condemn the blasphemous assumption of the priesthood and overthrow it, by once more introducing 'spiritual worship' of this one God—free of symbols, rituals, miraculous sacraments, ceremonials and sacrifices as necessary to salvation;

because administered by a consecrated order, a hierarchy—and one standing in the same relation to the Empire as the Pagan one, by usurping the place of the sacerdotal machinery of paganism. This spiritual worship was just what Jesus had taught as the kernel of his teaching and mission to the world.

“Bound up with this reformation will be the abandonment of the mistaken notion of affixing ‘infallibility’ to any of the Holy Scriptures in the world, or in their respective priesthood—whether Egyptians, Persians, Hindus, Babylonians, Jewish or any others in existence; along with their traditional teaching, upon which so much stress is laid by many.

“All these tomes contain man’s conception of God, man’s relation to God and man’s relation to his fellow creatures; and they show to the students how gradually these conceptions have been refined as civilisation progressed, until our own time—when truth has been at last revealed to mankind by Jesus: the glorious news of God being one,

whose nature is perfect love, joy and beauty, summed up in holiness. 'That this wonderful Creator, Preserver and Saviour is our Heavenly Father, who loves us for ever; that we are all His children, who should love and help each other; trying, in short, to be like Christ, who became the true Redeemer of the world by making every man also a Redeemer—making them to be like Jesus, to the extent of being filled with his spirit of love, and therefore willing to make sacrifices for others."

Reuben said:—"Your remarks make me feel the duty imposed upon all who wish the new cult success in the world, that the Christ Spirit which 'searches' for Truth should be desired by all as one of life's greatest treasures; just like the woman in the parable, who anxiously sought for the piece of silver, and with all diligence, until she found it. It is only by seeking and finding truth, whether in religion, in daily life and its work, or in nature around us, that humanity can advance in civilisation and

drive away the thick clouds of superstition and ignorance which still rest over the greater part of the world's inhabitants.

“Christianity, in its purity, simplicity, and beauty as a ‘spiritual worship,’ is clearly destined to become ultimately the all-embracing religion of the world; for nothing higher or better can ever be conceived. Of all religious faiths in the past which have appealed to humanity, this only has the ‘spirit of progress’ towards an ever-advancing perfection as one of the elements by which it proves its divine source. It is not a philosophy to be discussed, but a life to be lived in the spirit; a practical motive-force, to transform life to higher and more glorious issues.

“All other ancient faiths were conceived and built upon being stationary; rooted in the past, conservative, specially intended for a certain nation or particular cult, and therefore always resting and glorying in the bygone. Their golden age they placed in the past, but the Christian faith places its golden age in the future, and it inspires therefore activity,

enthusiasm and constant strivings to improve the world in every strata of society and the world at large—by a higher moral life, a better public spirit, a band of love, which unites all its members, and add to this the conquest of Nature's material forces to our use and well-being.

“Here, therefore, is the root of this buoyant rejuvenescence, which will ever distinguish a true Christian's outlook upon life; for the true Christian faith, inflexible in its few vital principles, is nevertheless ready to adapt these to all the various changes in life and environments, as these arise—in a world constantly subject to changes and new conditions, against which it has to provide, as well as new questions which it has to solve.

“Therefore, to all Christ's followers the duty should be incumbent that society, in all grades and through all generations, should be ‘educated,’ and made to be not only earnest and devoted ‘truth-speakers,’ but also earnest and devoted ‘truth-seekers’; so shall the light

of truth, like the sun in the noonday-heaven, drive away the mists of wrong conceptions, and the fear and dread of our blessed God of love, which still oppress darkened souls. It has been said that the truth shall make us free; and only by following in the blessed footsteps of Jesus shall humanity prosper and rise from one height of perfection to another. Again, I repeat, it is the Truth that the world is in want of—Truth proved and ascertained by its fruit—Truth in conformity with the soul's deepest instincts, spiritual insight and experience—Truth in conformity also with Jesus' revelation of God's adorable character—Truth in conformity with Jesus' own life and example, who showed by his daily life what was man's true relationship to God, to each other, and to the Universe around.

“These glorious principles we may look upon as Heaven's infallible truths, for higher than these we cannot rise in the soul's quest towards perfection, or dedication to God in true service and worship; and, indeed, these

divine principles are quite sufficient for all circumstances of life and conduct, as well as in all our relationship with God and our fellow-men for time and eternity. Therefore, this is the touchstone which will dispose of the rival claims of the manifold Sacred Scriptures in possession of mankind still known in the world, all of which claimed infallibility. Even the Hebrew Scriptures, the everlasting witness of spiritual evolution or progress, to which the Jews cling so devotedly, and of which every word or sentence is thought to be inspired by Jehovah: even in these sacred tomes, so full of highest wisdom, words of truth, piety, love, mercy and devotion, there are also found presentations of Jehovah and approval of things done and said which shock the "Love and Truth"-seeking spirit of Jesus. These prove abundantly that in every religious system, even the best, the gold is dimmed and mixed with baser metals; and that the latter predominate, until we reach the simple but divine principles enunciated by Jesus. Upon these the soul may rest for ever, with an

assurance that in these few and pregnant principles, the seeking soul, thirsting for absolute Truth, has found at last the infallibility and perfection which alone can satisfy its cravings and bless the world throughout all generations."

THE TRIUMPH OF CHRISTIANITY

DURING the same evening, as the two friends were sitting together, Reuben said to Apollos:—

“My visit is drawing to a close. Tell me, therefore, before I depart, how do you really regard this new movement, which you may call an offshot of the Jewish cult? In other words, what do you expect will happen if in the dim future Jesus of Nazareth, who is claimed by so many of his converts to have been the anointed Christ, the Son of God, comes to supplant the worship of Cæsar of Rome, who is also preached throughout the world as the anointed Christ and the Son of God? The Cæsar worship represents, in fact, all the various Pagan systems, for they may all be summed up in the creed represented by the apotheosis of the Cæsars.”

Apollos replied:—"This is a far-reaching question. I believe myself that, even in this apparently fortunate event, the gain to our Saviour's cause will be shorn of most of its spiritual triumphs, and that the name of Jesus, the Son of God, will unfortunately be used chiefly to oppress mankind and keep it in spiritual bondage, as hitherto—yea, perhaps even to a greater extent—instead of liberating and blessing it. What I mean is this: My fear is that the choice between the two rival factions will result in a compromise; nominally, the new sect of Jesus may gain the victory, but practically, Paganism, in its vast organisation centred in Rome, will still remain in power, only under a new designation. In other words, it will not be a sudden revolution, where the light will at once and for ever dispel the world's spiritual darkness. The actual result, I imagine, will be, as shown in the parable of Jesus, that the little leaven of spiritual life and light will only gradually be able to penetrate the darkness and transform it to its own beautiful light-giving

power. This is not done in a day; it may take many millenniums to educate and convert the nations of the earth, which are now sunk in barbarism, in the grossest superstitions and in idolatrous worship.

“If, therefore, the old Paganism practically remains, but under a new name, and as the State religion of the Empire, the natural consequence will be, that the despotic sway of its priesthood will likely continue in power with most of its old dogmas, ceremonials and ritualistic worship, with its sacraments and claim of spiritual supremacy. It may further be firmly established by being also bolstered up by the dogma of its infallibility, and, with the aid of the civil powers, crush any opposition by fire and sword.

“Thus, the reconstituted priesthood, with its Pontifex Maximus under some new name, if centred in Rome as a cosmopolitan religious system, may for many ages control the destiny of the human family in its spiritual, and even in its worldly, affairs; because it may still claim to be the judge and arbiter of divine

and human matters. Yet, amidst the prevalence of priestly arrogance and despotism, of dense ignorance and superstition on the part of the masses, of persecutions and torture of the saints, even unto death, the leaven of heavenly love, purity and truth, which Jesus introduced, will all the time slowly work its way, both in the Churches and through society at large, to bring about a brighter future to the human race.

“Therefore, while I recognise the slow progress, yet I see also better times in store for poor, enslaved, degraded humanity.

“The Oriental cults, with their depressing pessimism and degrading practices and worship, have brought gross superstition, cruelty, untold vices and bloodthirsty deities in their train; and in these most of the Pagan faiths may be summed up. My hope of a mighty force which may yet arise to aid Christianity is the revival or resurrection in the world of the life-giving spirit of ancient Greece. This light from heaven shone for some ages, to educate and elevate a large part of the civi-

lised world bordering on the Mediterranean Sea; and wherever it secured an entrance, it aided in the enfranchisement and advancement of the world—by its spirit of wisdom and of calm reason, by its spirit of freedom and love of truth, by its absence of a tyrannical priesthood, and by its aspiration for all that was lovely, true, and of good report.

“In short, let me remind you that the ancient Greeks, in their best days and by their foremost men, realised the harmony of Nature, the beauty of existence, the joyousness of life, the infinite value of the soul, its high descent and its close relationship to the unseen and eternal One.

“The wise teachers of Greece, optimistic to the core, as children of the Highest ought always to be, saw clearly that Existence, instead of being evil, as believed by the Oriental creeds, with all the dire consequences which followed, was, on the contrary, planned in order to yield in the end a perfect, permanent, overflowing joy in human hearts, prepared for it through life's limitations and trials.

“Now, the loving and lofty spirit of Jesus preaches exactly the same beautiful doctrine; hence, the spirit of the Greeks and the spirit of Jesus form a strong bond of attachment, and, united, will succeed, sooner or later, in conquering the spiritual realms of the whole world.

“Therefore, I would sum up my remarks by saying that in the new dispensation, the strongest motive of all to a consecrated life comes, when it is realised that man is a co-worker with the Eternal for the world’s progress and happiness; that man has the immanent God within him, by which the soul is gradually moulded on the pattern of the Highest—and conceived as a loving Father of all perfections, in whom will ever be found everything noble, true, lovable and beautiful, just as Jesus reflected these in his short pilgrimage in this life. The main thing to our progress in the perfect life will therefore be to realise the love of God, the nearness of the soul to God, and the everlasting union and love of the soul with God and man.

These are the eternal truths which Jesus announced, by which he lived himself; and upon these only will humanity reach its high destiny and its everlasting blessedness."

Reuben said, when Apollos had ended his remarks :—"Many thanks for your eloquent statement and summing up, with which I thoroughly agree; but still, you must remember that the Roman Empire consists of many hundred millions of people of all nationalities and creeds, and hence I should like to know what Titanic forces may be locked for to effect such a tremendous revolution as you calculate upon? Could you perhaps indicate them to me in a short compass, besides the weighty arguments already brought forward?"

Apollos replied:—"I will try to point out some of the other leading causes, which may contribute to bring about the world's conversion to the new cult.

"1st. Let us remember that the world at large is Pagan, in the sense that they see

the Divine everywhere—not only above the clouds, but in the living examples of heroes and great representatives of God on earth. Hence, you see how polytheism has such an enormous sway over the Gentiles. In a sense they may be right; but whether or not, owing to this belief, which has ruled from immemorial times, I am sure, that without a complete apotheosis of Jesus, the heathen world cannot be won over. Paganism requires no transcending God to worship, which is too lofty an idea for them to realise; but they require an incarnate God, who is at the same time a Saviour or Redeemer, whom they can love, adore, and imitate.

“*2nd.* For this reason I thoroughly agree with Paul’s conception, and the necessity of it. Now thanks to him and the Gnostic schools, from whom he learned it, the theory of divine emanations, along with Philo’s teaching of the Logos, both conceptions have been transferred to Jesus of Nazareth. In this splendid way the new sect has got an immovable fulcrum, upon which the world

may be moved; say a theory—monotheistic in one sense such as the Jews believe in and from which it arose, and with which it claims closest kinship—on the other hand, related to polytheism, which is giving us a Trinity in Unity.

“*3rd.* From this fusion arises the importance of our Logos Gospel, for here you have impressively depicted :—

1st. The personality of the Eternal Logos.

2nd. The identity of the Logos with Jesus.

3rd. The incarnation of Jesus.

4th. The title of Christ, the ideal of humanity.

5th. The necessity and value of his life as an example.

6th. The importance of his death and sacrifice.

7th. The doctrine of salvation being summed up in love to God and love to man—in other words, God being our Father and all men being our brethren.

From this summary you will see that the

new sect will introduce a nobler conception of God and a holier and happier world.

“*4th.* I admit that the above conceptions by themselves will not account for everything, but other factors will also be at work. Let me name one or two of a more practical nature.

“The new sect will succeed, because the world-conceptions which have impressed themselves deeply upon the Gentile world, seen in their creeds and rites, will to a considerable extent remain unimpaired; hence the transition from heathenism to the new sect will be facilitated to a remarkable extent, and will help the new movement immensely. In other words, these hoary ideas and sacred convictions, which have prevailed among the nations of the world since time immemorial, will be carried over into our new sect, only remodelled and fused together. The new sect will thus constitute a summary of the most essential and the noblest traditions of Paganism, especially as regards sin, atone-

ment and redemption; in some respects it is also closely related to Judaism, with its beliefs in these and similar dogmas.

“If you turn, therefore, to Paganism, to be represented in the new sect, it will be necessary to transfer several of the outstanding Pagan symbolic ceremonies and rites, with their sacraments of bread and wine, called the Eucharist; also the symbols of Baptism and ablutions, with various other rites and festivals in common use.

“Of course, the worship of Jesus as the Divine Logos, the Son of God, the Mediator and Redeemer of the world, will gradually take the place of all the other deities hitherto worshipped by the Pagans. I fancy also that from the Ephesian and similar cults must be transferred the additional worship of a Divine Virgin Mother; and from the Rabbis, the Bath-Kol—the heavenly Spirit or Holy Ghost, &c., thus conceiving the threefold nature of God, under the symbol of three Divine Persons in the Godhead—a Trinity in Unity.

“In our new sect, however, the Pagan mysteries, hitherto confined to secret teaching among selected initiated, will be thrown open as a simple ritual to all believers—rich or poor, learned or unlearned. This will make it more popular, especially by making it accessible on certain festivals to the mass of the people; and will thus educate them to a higher religious life, with love to God and man as the leading principle in their creed and in their daily conduct. Indeed, the new sect will thus gather unto itself the quintessence of the noble past of all the world religions. It may be called the old Paganism, purified by Monotheism—a re-interpretation of the old, suitable to new conditions. It will also be Judaism superseded in its ancient form by reappearing in a new aspect, by having all its doctrines spiritualised; thus practically solving and unifying the conflicting problems found between this and others of the world’s religious systems.

“Another important factor, to which I alluded the other day, and which will aid

to enlist thousands upon thousands of Gentiles into the new sect, is the fact that the slave population, which constitutes the vast majority in every great city in the Empire, along with the freed slaves, will be more readily converted to the new faith than any other class of society. Indeed, already the new sect is almost exclusively recruited in Italy from the lowest ranks of the proletariat, because the precious doctrine of the brotherhood of the human race is the true expression of their ideal. The Gospel of the poor means to them a guarantee of present equality, as also an earnest of future bliss. The slave population is therefore gradually coming to follow the Christ, when preached to them as their own special protector and representative upon earth; for like a common slave, he suffered crucifixion (the death penalty of the worst slaves). He endured the cross and despised the shame, in order, they believe, to save his brother-slaves, with the down-trodden, the poor and the despised upon earth.

“These, and the common and crushed people everywhere, he loved, and for these he sacrificed himself; for these he died and rose again, for these he ascended to heaven; and lastly, for their salvation and glorification, he is now daily expected to return to the earth to take vengeance over their oppressors and set free all the slaves. This glorious news to the slaves in the Roman world, of freedom and happiness near at hand, will be found to be one of the greatest inducements to them to flock in thousands and tens of thousands to the new sect. You can hardly overestimate the effect of this in the Roman Empire and throughout the Roman army, where the new sect is also slowly gaining entrance even among the common soldiers, who in many respects are little better than slaves.

“The popular will regarding the election of an Emperor rests nowadays, as you know, chiefly with the army corps which have the most successful and popular general; and in Rome also—practically with the lawless mob,

consisting mostly of slaves or freed men, the latter of whom have gained their freedom by some means or other. Hence it may become a matter of great importance to Christianity, politically as well as otherwise, if the slave population is gradually brought into the fold of Christ; for these count not their thousands, but their millions, and will be a force worth reckoning with sooner or later.

“Speaking about the Roman legions, upon which the Empire depends for its existence, you will know that the cult of Mithraism has spread in the West with great rapidity during the last century, not only among philosophers and their manifold esoteric schools, but much more in the Roman army, where it is becoming the fashionable creed and has its tens of thousands of admirers and worshippers in all grades of the service. The reason is not far to seek; for as the Roman Empire has expanded in the West, it has recruited largely from Persia and other military countries in Asia. Now the greater bulk of these Oriental soldiers were worshippers of Mithra, and hence

in the military camps, with their large followers of Asiatic traders, &c., you are sure nowadays of finding in most of them a rough temple erected and inscribed in honour of the Invincible Sun-God Mithra (*Deo Soli Invicto Mithra*), whom these legions of soldiers daily worship.

“Mithra is known as the ‘War God,’ because this deity is believed to be in constant warfare with evil upon earth, and with the Prince of Evil himself; hence his worshippers are known to make splendid soldiers, and the Roman authorities, out of a deep policy, encourage this cult as being specially fitted for warriors in the service of the Empire.

“Now, you may ask what has all this to do with our new sect? Very much indeed, and here are some of the reasons :

“The primitive religious faiths of the Romans and Greeks are crumbling away, having lost their hold on educated people almost everywhere.

“The one most likely cult, however, which

is favourably known, and which might take their places in the Roman Empire, is *Mithraism*—with its pure ethical teaching, its Monotheism and its brave warrior spirit against physical, social, moral and spiritual evils. Now as against Mithraism, the narrow Jewish cult has not the slightest chance, nor have the other corrupt Oriental cults or Greek and other philosophical schools. As regards the religion of the far North, the home of the brave Vikings: of this I know too little to express a reliable opinion, but its influence upon imperial religious affairs I look upon as nil.

“There only remains, therefore, as a religious force to be reckoned with, our young sect of Christians; which, like young David of old, may be called in God’s providence to overthrow the Goliaths of the mighty Romans, Greeks, and Mithraic cults—its chief opponents.

“But you may ask, how can this be done? and I answer, because I firmly believe our creed has an intrinsic superiority, representing

the highest type yet evolved of a universal religion. It will not succeed, however, by trying to ride rough-shod over all other religious systems now in existence. This would be to court an early defeat and disaster.

“It must come as a purifying, as a selective, and as a conciliatory force; which, by persuasion and by its own merits, will substitute the higher for the lower. The way to succeed must therefore be a threefold one:—

1st. By wise concessions.

2nd. By prudent compromises.

3rd. By absorption of what is best in each.

In other words, our new faith must incorporate all that is true, good, and beautiful, *i.e.* the best that is found in each and all of the other creeds, thus reconciling them all by lifting them into a higher Unity. Thus it will gradually but permanently establish itself as the universal religion in the Roman world, in which all the other creeds will come to find their true complement.

“Our noble faith being based upon Love to God our Heavenly Father, and Love to the whole human race as our brethren, will therefore succeed in sweeping away all the barriers of ancient sects and creeds—which have now had their day.

“Thus it will succeed—by being able to satisfy the religious needs of the common people, both in their joys and in their sorrows; revealing to them undreamt of possibilities of eternal happiness, in store for every faithful follower in the spirit of Jesus Christ. It will also be able to throw a bright light upon life’s darkest problems, a solution of which has always occupied the minds of the world’s greatest thinkers.

“Let me now draw to a close, by confining your attention to this Mithraism, which I also admire, and in which, as said, is found the most formidable rival of our young faith. I consider it is the most noble and most vigorous Gentile cult, being securely built upon Monotheism; just as is found in Judaism, so

that both have much in common with our own faith.

“If we wish, therefore, to gain over Mithraism, we must face the problem by quietly incorporating the leading outstanding ceremonies, sacraments, rites, and symbols which have affinity with our own sect.

“In fact, there is so much similarity in all these cults which go under different names, because they all practically emanate from the ancient sun worship, which I need not explain to you.

“Now I come to the point. In the Mithraic cult you will find that many centuries before Jesus appeared, Mithra was worshipped as a suffering God, who came down upon earth to overcome the Prince of Evil; to become the world's Mediator, Saviour, Judge, and lastly, the Vicegerent upon earth of the Highest. Mithra, like all the sun-gods, was slain, buried, and rose again victorious over death, bringing immortality and happiness in his train.

“This cult has besides, as you know, an

elaborate ceremonial and an impressive initiation in its mysterious rites; among which are also found the Eucharist, Baptism, prayers for the dead, the resurrection and ascension of Mithra, &c.

“I need not enlarge, but you will find that most of these beliefs, ceremonies, and symbolic rites, are already being gradually incorporated into the Christian cult; thus fusing the two creeds together—not by conquest, but by peaceful amalgamation. Hence, there will be little difficulty—more especially if our new cult in God’s good time gains the honour of becoming in its purity of doctrine the State religion of the Empire—in winning over to our new faith, not only the worshippers of Mithra in the army, but will also convert the nations throughout the conquered provinces of Asia Minor, where Mithraism has many millions of worshippers. One great help in gaining them over will be that by that time the new converts will find their own main rites fully established and flourishing in the Christian Church, which will be of wonderful assistance to us. Another

powerful aid will be the well-known desire of the Roman authorities to establish a uniformity of belief and worship throughout the world under her sway; hence, with this powerful civil power to aid her, the Christian Church will likely gain an easy entrance everywhere.

“In the way imagined, the old Paganism of manifold creeds will be purified and will reappear in a new dress and under a new name in Christian doctrines; for all the Pagan Saviours will then come to be looked upon as having been prototypes of Jesus Christ, and the various Pagan religious systems as having been prophecies of Christianity.

“I confess, however, that it will come to mean that the true spirit of the Christian faith will become much more Pagan than Jewish; although, of course, the influence of the Jewish scriptures and dogmas will also aid mightily in many directions in the development of Christianity as an offshoot of Judaism, its Messiah having been a Jew. In spite of all this we see daily that Jesus as the Messiah is being rejected by his own countrymen almost everywhere, but

more especially in Palestine; where his cult unfortunately has turned out a complete fiasco, except among a small and uneducated rabble—which, however, counts for nothing, when we speak of the Jewish nation as a whole.

“Various other factors are also at work, besides these named. You know that many rills are needed to make up a big river; still each one separately, although small, has its value in bringing out the combined result. Let me, however, mention only one more.

“The factor which has been in operation during the last thirty-five years—in fact, ever since Jesus died—is the undying belief of the bulk of his disciples as to his speedy return to earth, to introduce the Kingdom of Heaven with all its glories and joys, and in which all his people shall share to the full.

“The watchword of our new sect has therefore all along been one which we may call: ‘Maranatha’—‘Our Lord is coming.’

“This, perhaps, as previously mentioned,

more than anything else, has been, and still is, the drawing power to bring souls into the fold. All those Jews or Gentiles who join us are braced to face persecution, torture, fire and sword; because they believe the world is coming to an end in a few years at most, and that martyrdom for Christ's sake means the highest rewards which Heaven can bestow upon the faithful. And those devoted souls who live to see Christ's return from heaven to earth—they at any rate will escape the horror of the overthrow of the Roman Empire and the destruction of the wicked. Not only will they escape the coming evil—but, glorious to think, they will be the honoured citizens in the new world to be introduced and established by Christ upon the ruins of the old, with all the honours and glories of which they will be sharers for evermore.

“Now if you converge all these various rays into one focus, you may realise that our cause in the world may yet end in victory.”

Reuben again thanked Apollos for his interesting remarks, but stated to him, that

he was afraid the old Superior would not have approved of many of these concessions to the Gentiles, instead of preaching the simple Gospel of Jesus, unadulterated; "still, these concessions might be stepping-stones to a purer and truer faith in centuries yet to come, if the world really lasts until the distant 'millennium' comes—as is now expected by many, who console themselves and their impatient followers (wearied and disheartened at the unexpected delay of the Lord's speedy return from Heaven), with the words of the Psalmist of old, who explained 'that a thousand years in the sight of the Lord are but as yesterday when it is past, and as a watch in the night.'"

THE PARTING

NEXT morning early, as the two friends were partaking of their frugal breakfast, the door opened, and a messenger appeared from the harbour,¹ saying that the Greek coasting vessel the *Cygne* (The Swan) had arrived and would leave again early in the afternoon. The shipmaster had consulted the leading astrologer of Ephesus, who drew the horoscope and urged him to go to sea at once, it being the festival day of the sailors' patron, God Poseidon (Neptune), for which reason they might expect a favourable breeze to take them to Italy with their cargo of grain.

Reuben had booked his passage by her; but, she having arrived sooner than expected, the day of his departure was thereby hastened.

¹ Ephesus was situated about six miles from the sea, nearly opposite the island of Samos.

In a short time, however, Reuben made himself ready, and the two friends had their last confidential talk before Reuben went to say good-bye to other friends at Ephesus, after which he joined the ship.

Reuben expressed his great regret at having now to part with his dear friend Apollos, whom he would likely not see again in this life, and in whose company he had passed so many profitable and pleasant hours.

Apollos warmly reciprocated, after which Reuben proceeded: — “Before we part, we must arrange some business matters. When our beloved Superior of Hazazon Tama was near his end he appointed me to devote a third part of his fortune to aid the new mission of love inaugurated by our ever dear Jesus, the Christ, in which he had taken the liveliest interest from the beginning. Obedient to the wishes of the deceased, I have therefore assisted in various ways with money, food and clothes, those of his followers, especially during the late persecutions, when many precious lives of God’s saints were saved

by my intervention. Now, however, when peace again reigns in the churches, and the biography of Jesus' life and mission is at last completed by you, I think our late Superior would approve if I allotted a sufficient sum of money for the object of circulating this new memoir to the various churches in the Dispersion, and perhaps even further afield if there should be a demand for it. I will therefore ask you to employ some able copyists for this purpose, and pay them liberally in order to induce them to do the work with care and fidelity. Perhaps Sylvanus or Timothy may be the most suitable parties to employ for this purpose. They would both be interested in the work, and at the same time thankful to be entrusted with it; especially, as you tell me, that both are poor in worldly goods, in spite of their literary qualifications. But being converts to the new faith, I know it is difficult for them to make a living—either among the Gentiles or the Jews, and especially among the latter.

“I have written to the treasurer of the

Temple Serapis at Alexandria, where all the funds are deposited on good interest, and requested him to send you promptly a sum of money to account for this purpose of circulating the Gospel far and near."

Apollos was greatly pleased, and thanked his friend most cordially.

Reuben continued:—"As for yourself, I am not able to express my debt of gratitude to you for having so successfully composed and completed the biography of our beloved Master, on the lines laid down by our late Superior.

"I know you have refused over and over again to accept any remuneration for the labour of love, so I will not offend you by again pressing money for your acceptance. I know, however, that there are many poor disciples of the Messiah at Ephesus, both among converted Jews and Gentiles; hence I have resolved to send you a donation, not for your beautiful sanctuary, but for the hospital connected therewith, to enable you, for Christ's sake and in his spirit, to aid

the sick, the poor, the infirm and the aged converts, as you may think proper. I leave this entirely to your own discretion. Perhaps I may add, after seeing the good work done in Asia Minor and the cheering prospects for the spread of Messiah's Kingdom, that in making out my last will and testament I have appointed you my legatee, with instructions that my entire fortune after my death shall be devoted to the spread of the Gospel, and I hope you will show your friendship to me by accepting the said appointment, and thus carry out my last wishes to the best of your power."

Apollo was greatly surprised at all that he heard, but gladly accepted the generous proposal. He told Reuben, however, that he could not conceive why he, a man in the prime of life, should already have thought of disposing of his property and wealth, by making out his last will when so far from home.

Reuben smiled, and said:—"I have a presentiment that I shall not return alive to

Alexandria, hence the step which I have taken before leaving Ephesus,—to dispose of my fortune for the progress of the Church of Christ in the world.

“In spite of the favourable horoscope—upon which, however, I do not place the slightest reliance—besides, Poseidon is a mythical figure, pure and simple—I confess to you that I apprehend that stormy weather may prevail on the voyage; the season being now pretty well advanced, partly also owing to the sudden intense heat which has prevailed here since yesterday, as this latter especially, I fear, bodes no good for our success. In all seriousness, therefore, I have the feeling that in this old ship *Cygne*, which I hear is deeply loaded with grain, we may suffer shipwreck on the way to Italy, if a sudden storm should overtake us. Who knows?”

Apollos answered:—“Dear friend. Your remarks make me venture to put a question to you. Tell me, are you afraid to die, seeing you have these premonitions of an early death?”

“Not the slightest,” replied Reuben, smilingly. “The reason is that, like Jesus our Christ, I believe with all my heart that our loving, compassionate Heavenly Father has my fate in His hands, and as such He knows what is best for His child—whether to remain here, or to call me to another and higher existence; hence, I am not only calm and resigned like a Stoic, but, as a follower of Christ, I am ever in the most happy and cheerful frame of mind.

“When dying, I am but crossing the boundary of time, with all its storms and stress, to enter the peace and rest of the realm of Eternity, with its untold joys and with the nearer realisation of the soul’s loftiest aspirations. There the spiritual body will be radiantly beautiful and spotless, being for evermore a perfect organ of a perfect soul. Therefore, why should I tremble at the approach of the angel of death, the unveiler of life eternal, who opens to me the golden gates of immortality? I shall make him gladly welcome; for those near and dear to

me whom I leave behind, I know they too will soon follow, and will meet me at the trysting-place of loving souls.

“Is it not true also that the immortal life’s joyous morn is but beginning for us, when night is ended with its sleep of death? It will be with a kiss of love that the soul awakens to the life eternal, in the sweet home circle of affection, of beauty and of bliss.”

“Beautifully and poetically expressed,” replied Apollos; “but what of life’s sorrows and heart-breaks here?”

“Ah!” said Reuben, “you forget that this life is the workshop, where the lapidary subjects every precious stone in its rough state, whether diamond, ruby, or sapphire, large or small, to the process of being polished, in order that each facet, as it is cut, shall reflect, sooner or later, in its sparkling loveliness some rays of God’s exceeding beauty. Remember, however, that the cutting and polishing of these precious gems entail both time and labour; anyhow, it cannot be done without friction, nor can man be perfected without trials. By

this illustration, we may justify God's dealings with men. In other words, our life here is a preparation for a higher life yonder. With this thought, let us be content, and do the best we can to make the world better and happier while we are here. Although it is true that the roots of our religion must go down deep to the inmost recesses of the soul of man, yet its beautiful fruit should be seen in every act of our lives.

"But now let us dismiss this theme, and I shall come to an end of my remarks by saying that I wish, as a memento of our friendship, and as a memorial of your stay at the lovely monastery at Hazazon Tama, to hand you a little parchment roll, sealed and tied carefully, which I beg you to accept. Let me tell you its story.

"Some ten years ago I was present at Hazazon Tama, at the commemoration service in honour of Jesus our Christ, this being exactly twenty-five years after his lamented death. During the week, various lectures were given, and lively discussions were held, bearing

upon the life and mission of Jesus our Christ, to which the visitors had each brought some contribution, to aid the Superior in undertaking the work of compiling the memoirs of Jesus, based upon facts in the career of our Messiah.

“Our beloved Superior took a lively interest in all these meetings, in spite of his advanced years. He took also a leading part in the daily discussions; even the day before his lamented death he had arranged, at the request of some of the visitors, to give a lecture on death and immortality.

“He used, when he was well, to speak extempore; but this time, feeling unable for the exertion, he brought with him a written outline on the subject, which he had used on a former occasion many years previously.

“He asked me at the last moment to read his lecture to the audience, and I was on the point of doing so when he fainted; and most unfortunately, and to the deep grief of all who knew and loved him so much, he died on the following morning. The roll I now present to

you is the said MS. Knowing your great admiration and love for this Saint of God, he more especially being in God's providence the one under whose blessed influence and spiritual teaching Jesus himself was educated and trained for his life-work, I know you will value this roll as a treasure for his sake."

Apollos was overjoyed to receive such a precious souvenir, the more so as he knew that the Superior's writings, indeed the whole valuable library with many precious MSS., had, along with the building of the Essene order, been destroyed by fire, together with the near-lying pretty little town of Engedi. This had taken place two years before, when the Roman army, on its march to the fortress Massala in the south to strengthen the garrison, were surprised by a large contingent of the Jewish fanatical Sicarees or rebels against Cæsar, who lay in ambush for them in this sheltered and rocky locality. A fierce battle ensued, which at last ended in a complete victory to the Romans, who lost, however, many a brave warrior; but in return they massacred in their

→ fury all the Sicarii who fell into their hands, and completed the work by razing to the ground and burning the whole town of Engedi with the monastery of Hazazon Tama, leaving behind them nothing but ruin and desolation. This had been the direct cause which led to the scattering of the Essene monks in that locality; and the beautiful Hazazon Tama, alas, was therefore no more!

Reuben resumed his remarks, bearing upon the roll of the Superior's lecture, by adding:—

“You will find that it has been written in Aramaic, using the ancient Hebrew characters, but for its greater usefulness, I would recommend you to translate it into Greek, of which you are a master, and send me a copy. You should distribute some copies among your converted friends, also to others, say elderly people, for whom this world will soon be a thing of the past—for the roll contains musings on life, death, and immortality.

“One interesting item I notice in connection with this roll, and that is, that our Superior has affixed the date of its composi-

tion as being eight years before Jesus began his mission. This will bring us to the time of the Superior's entrance upon the work at Hazazon Tama, when he was called from Alexandria. At that period we know that Jesus our Christ lived in the monastery as a student, so that in all likelihood he had been present and heard the delivery of this lecture, also the Buddhist Rabbi Ananda. This will give an additional interest to the roll as a keepsake."

Apollos once again expressed his delight and deep gratitude for all that Reuben had done to him individually, as also to the Church of Christ; and he promised he would do his utmost conscientiously to give effect to the wishes of his friend, regarding the disposal of the fortune he was leaving for the progress of Christ's Kingdom upon earth.

As for the roll, he would translate it as soon as possible, and send a copy to Timothy in the first place, for he was sure he would enjoy it; likewise to Sylvanus, seeing that

the MS. had come from such an original and beloved thinker as their late Superior.

In return, he handed Reuben a presentation copy, written on the finest parchment, of the "Spiritual Biography of Jesus"; which Reuben placed in his toga, and promised that during his voyage to Italy he would study it carefully.

Time had passed swiftly, and they were on the point of parting, when Reuben said :—"Speaking lately about Timothy reminds me to make inquiries about your old friend Paul, of whom I have lost sight for some years. How is his mission succeeding in Asia and the Grecian Island, which countries I understand he has visited several times in his missionary labours?"

Apollos replied :—"To my deep regret, I must tell you that our dear brother Paul suffered a martyr's death at Rome fully a year ago. He left Ephesus on his last journey for Nicopolis, by way of Miletus and Corinth, his destination being ultimately Rome. We had the happiness of having him with us on

the Sabbath day. In the morning he preached in Aramaic in the Jewish quarters, to a large number of converted Jews, consisting mostly of the poor and needy classes of the Jewish community. Among these, however, he has many attached friends. While, on the other hand, the better-class of Jews hate him with a perfect hatred, for having deserted his father's faith, as they understand it; by abolishing circumcision, the animal sacrifices in Jerusalem, and many other of their sacred ceremonies and beliefs. Well, later in the day Paul visited our splendid little sanctuary, which he admired greatly. To it is attached the hospital, where our sick are nursed; for you know that the temples of Æsculapius and Apollo, both being gods of medicine, have always a building attached for nursing and curing the sick. This latter, I believe, is also Christ-like work, which we should continue in connection with our Church of Christ. Well, Paul preached to a crowded congregation, composed chiefly of Gentile converts. At my suggestion he avoided all

controversial subjects, and preached in Greek an eloquent sermon, with his customary fervour, in spite of his bodily infirmities and advancing years.

“I remember that he took as a text one of his favourite sayings:—‘The love of God which passeth all understanding,’ and in the course of his discourse he argued that God had predestinated us all to be conformed to the beautiful image of His dear Son. The vital proof of this was seen in our beginning to live the love-life of Christ upon earth—with however faltering steps. In this way the soul would gradually become transfigured to live the glorified life in Heaven, being joint heirs with Christ in his glory, having at last by his grace been made meet and perfected in love, holiness and bliss.

“I also remember that Paul repeated with enthusiasm a beautiful short poem of his own composition, which I hear is called in other Churches, ‘The Hymn of Love.’ In this Paul extols the virtue of love or charity, as being above all other graces. To him it was

the conquering power of love, which transforms the brute nature of man into the spirit nature which makes us akin to God Himself in His unselfish and disinterested nature, and which was reflected so brightly and beautifully in our Lord Jesus Christ when dwelling upon earth.

“ Paul closed his address with the following splendid peroration, which I had not heard before, and which was very memorable and impressive: — ‘For I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor power, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which was reflected so gloriously in our Lord Jesus Christ.’

“ Well, this noble soul, this splendid and eloquent ambassador of Christ, has gone to his heavenly rest, after a noble fight on behalf of his Master and in order to honour him; and who can doubt but that Paul will have received his reward, the crown of glory which fadeth not away?”

Reuben quite agreed with the high praises bestowed upon the illustrious Paul, and he confessed that he had been an exceedingly able, zealous and most lovable man; indeed, a very pillar of the Christian Church. At the same time, Reuben had all along disagreed with the theological system which Paul had formulated, and had striven to promulgate for so many years; chiefly among the Gentiles but also among his own countrymen in the Diaspora, in order to win them over to his own faith from Rabbinical and similar sources.

Reuben closed the conversation by saying to Apollos:—"It seems to me that the spiritual biography you have composed is superior in every respect—not only to the other gospels put into circulation, but also to the teaching of Paul, which is chiefly seen in the many epistles he wrote to various Churches, some of which, however, it is said, have been sent by other able teachers in the name of Paul to honour him. Let me therefore congratulate you once more upon your

completion of this *last* Gospel, which, without doubt, will always rank as one of the Church's most important and spiritual treasures. It should therefore easily take the place of the *lost* Gospel which I collected, and which I was the first to put in the hands of the disciples of Christ; but which, after having served its temporary purpose, is now incorporated more or less in the subsequent writings of the other Evangelists. In this case, therefore, the old proverb certainly holds true, 'that the last shall be the first.' May your noble work therefore remain in the world as an inspiration to all followers of our Christ, and also as having best reflected his wonderful, attractive and beautiful spirit, with the true object of his spiritual mission upon earth—until the day comes when he himself, as promised, returns in spirit to the earth, bringing with him this time the new heaven and the new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness."

To these remarks Apollos fervently added, "Amen and Amen."

One word in closing. The *Cygne*, in her white dress, started well; and for some time ran merrily along, favoured by a gentle breeze, with all sails set. By-and-by, however, the wind fell, and she was seen lying becalmed, only kept slightly moving forward by the vigorous oars of the galley slaves. The heat now became still more sultry, almost unbearable. Then, as if by the wand of a magician, the scene suddenly changed. A gale of an unprecedented violence sprang up, without almost a moment's notice, and with all the elements as it were let loose. Waves like mountains met the eye everywhere, where shortly before the sea had been calm and glassy like a mirror. Surely Poseidon (Neptune) had taken his trident, and, with his reckless companions of Nereids and sea monsters, was celebrating the festival in his honour in a more boisterous fashion than the astrologer at Ephesus had imagined.

The *Cygne* was now seen from the shore to labour heavily in the raging sea, with the loss of both her masts and all her boats.

Alas, as if this was not enough, suddenly she was seen, by a tremendous wave breaking over her, to be thrown on her beam-end, probably by the shifting of her cargo; and then, the next moment, she was observed to disappear beneath the waves, accompanied by the wild, woeful shrieks of the wind, performing the last dirge at the burial of the ship with all her crew and passengers, of whom, alas! not a soul was saved.

Reuben's premonition had proved too true; his end had come, even sooner than he or any one could have imagined.

Next morning, when all was again quiet and peaceful, a fisherman found on the beach a small parchment roll thrown up by the sea. On examination by experts in the court before the Roman Proconsul, the following inscription was deciphered on the outside of the roll in large Greek letters:—

The Records of Jesus our Christ

whose message to the world was:

“GOD IS LOVE.”

This was evidently the presentation copy given by Apollos to Reuben, on parting with him the day before. Apparently he had clasped the treasure to his breast, as the ship foundered.

The Roman Proconsul¹ stood in deep thoughts for a little; and as he turned to the members of the court, he said:—

“This is truly an extraordinary and profound message, which the sea has brought to us from the deep, proclaiming that ‘God is Love.’ If believed and acted upon, it would bring heaven down upon the earth.”

The Roman Proconsul had uttered a profound truth; for now, nearly two thousand years after these events, and while during this interval the Roman Empire, and all the pomp and glitter of those and subsequent ages, have perished on the ocean of life, the heavenly message contained in this little parchment roll is still with us, and is slowly

¹ His name was Barea Soranus (see Tacitus, *Ann.* 16–23).

bringing heaven down upon earth—as its message is believed and acted upon.

The world's salvation, elevation, happiness and progress can only be reached by humanity living in the spirit of Christ, as contained in this cheering and inspiring message which he left to the world, summed up in the one sentence:—

“GOD IS LOVE.”

With this little episode ends the story of the *lost* Gospel, and the *last* Gospel of the Christian Church.

END OF VOL. II.

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“The writer seems to have read widely and deeply, and has an enviable gift of imparting the result of his studies in readily intelligible and well-chosen language. Many a beautiful thought wedded to beautiful words is to be found in the positive teaching of Transformed Hinduism.”—*The Baptist*.

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